AMAR CHITRA KATHA

SWAMI PRANAVANANDA

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Vol 679

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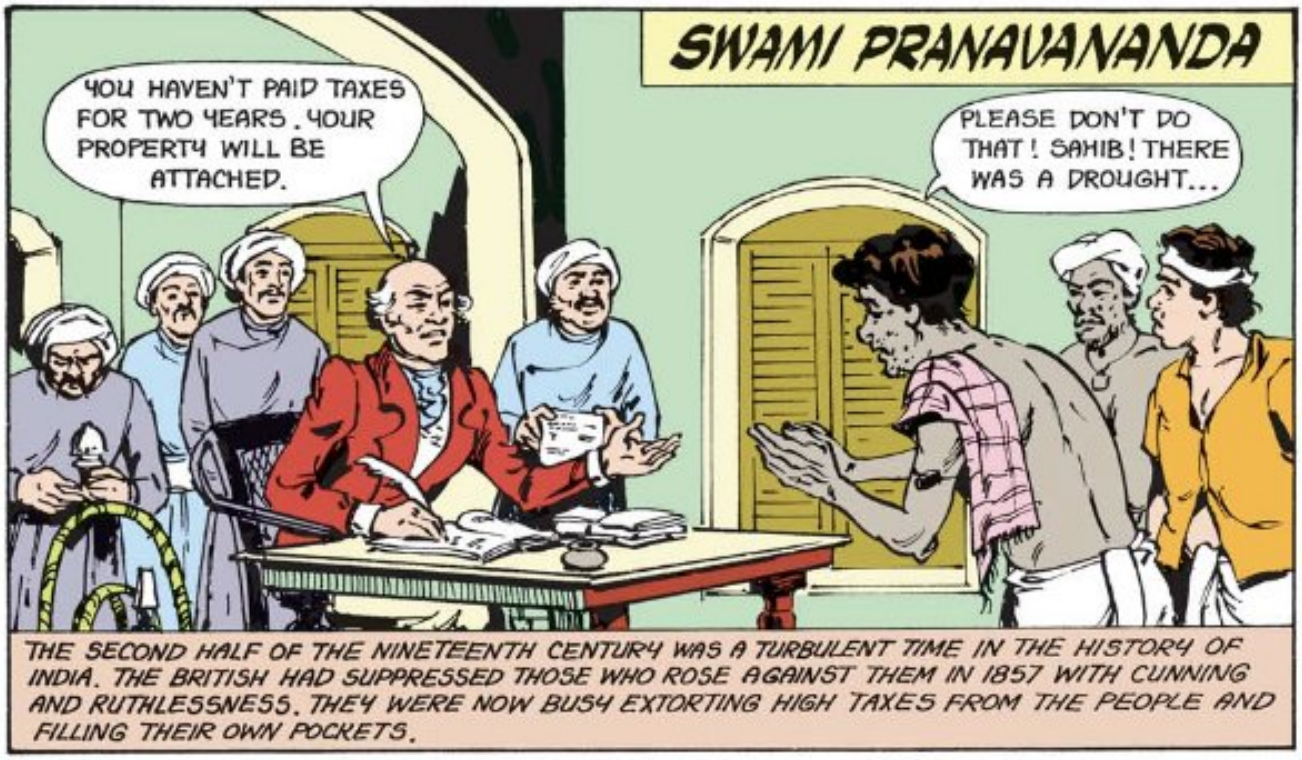
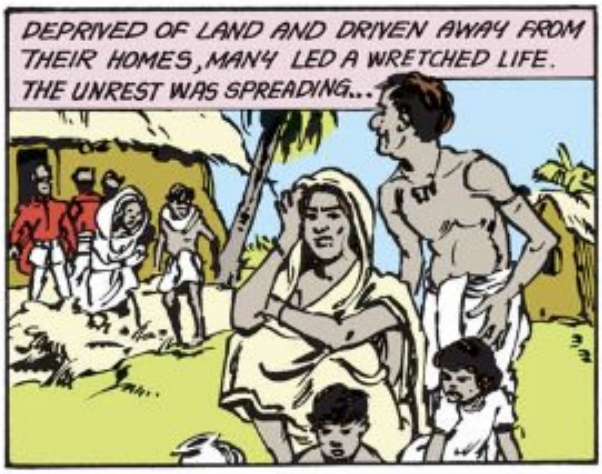
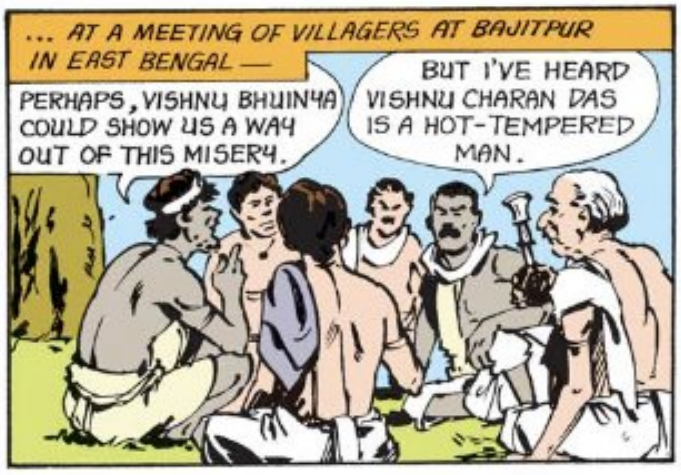
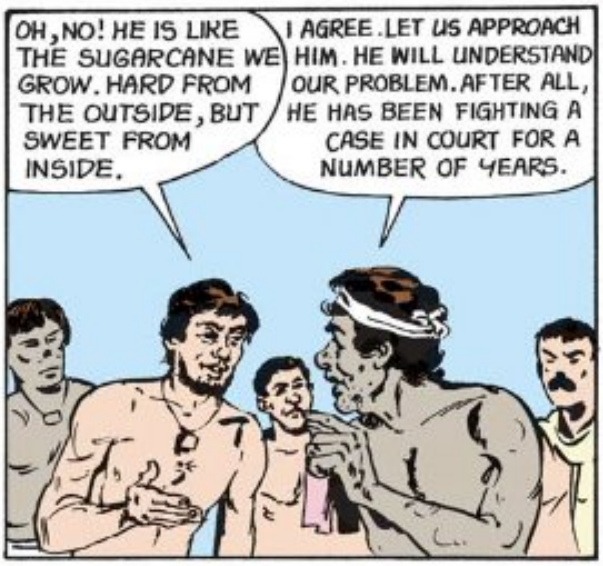
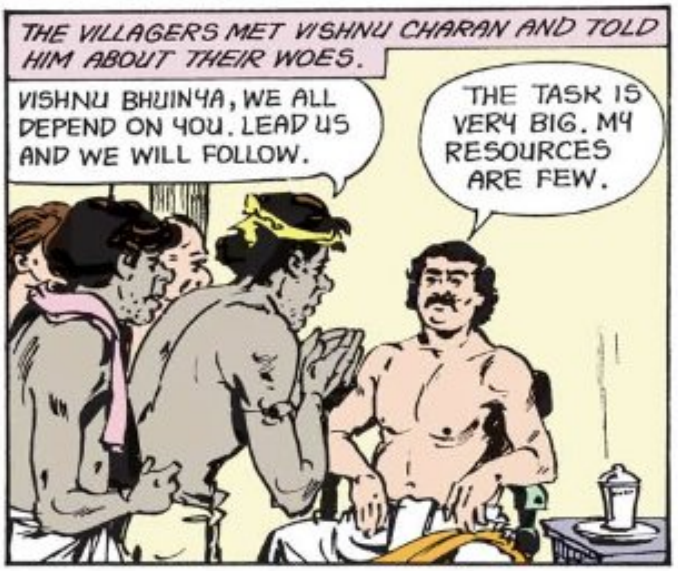

SWAMI PRANAVANANDA
YOU HAVEN'T PAID TAXES FOR TWO YEARS. YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE ATTACHED.
PLEASE DON'T DO THAT! SAHIB! THERE WAS A DROUGHT...
THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WAS A TURBULENT TIME IN THE HISTORY OF INDIA. THE BRITISH HAD SUPPRESSED THOSE WHO ROSE AGAINST THEM IN 1857 WITH CUNNING AND RUTHLESSNESS. THEY WERE NOW BUSY EXTORTING HIGH TAXES FROM THE PEOPLE AND FILLING THEIR OWN POCKETS.

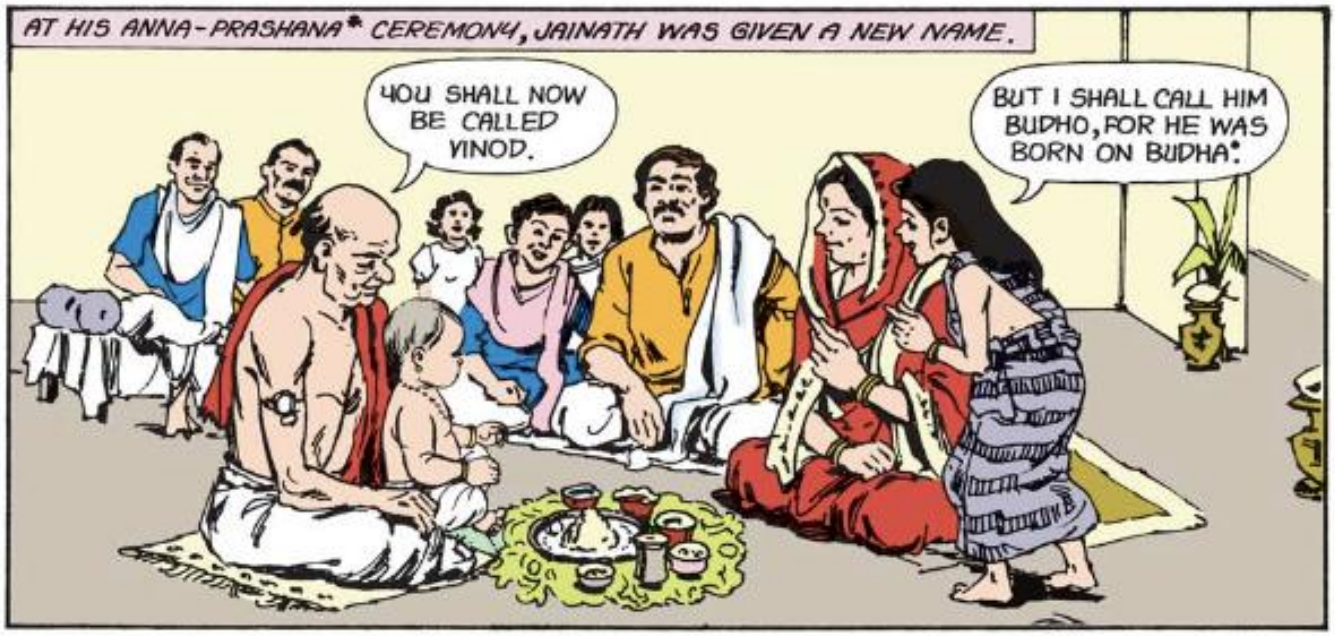

DEPRIVED OF LAND AND DRIVEN AWAY FROM THEIR HOMES, MANY LED A WRETCHED LIFE. THE UNREST WAS SPREADING...

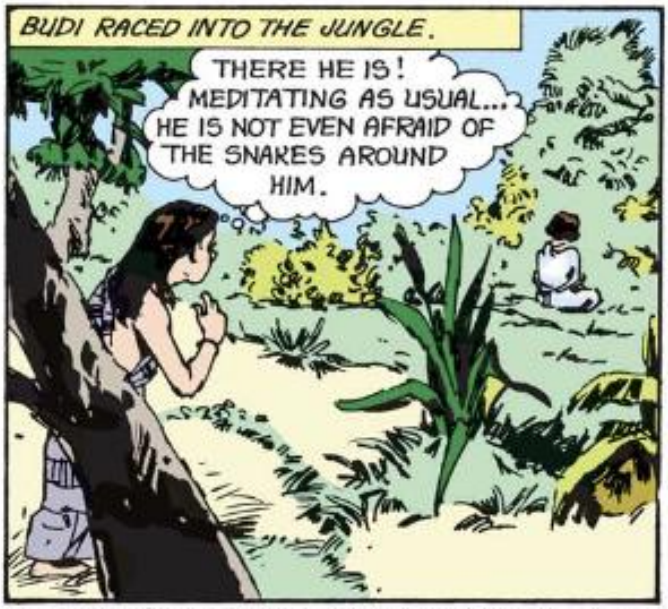

... AT A MEETING OF VILLAGERS AT BAJITPUR IN EAST BENGAL —
PERHAPS, VISHNU BHUINYA COULD SHOW US A WAY OUT OF THIS MISERY.
BUT I'VE HEARD VISHNU CHARAN DAS IS A HOT-TEMPERED MAN.


OH, NO! HE IS LIKE THE SUGARCANE WE GROW. HARD FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT SWEET FROM INSIDE.
I AGREE. LET US APPROACH HIM. HE WILL UNDERSTAND OUR PROBLEM. AFTER ALL, HE HAS BEEN FIGHTING A CASE IN COURT FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.


THE VILLAGERS MET VISHNU CHARAN AND TOLD HIM ABOUT THEIR WOES.
VISHNU BHUINYA, WE ALL DEPEND ON YOU. LEAD US AND WE WILL FOLLOW.
THE TASK IS VERY BIG. MY RESOURCES ARE FEW.

* ANOTHER NAME FOR LORD SHIVA.

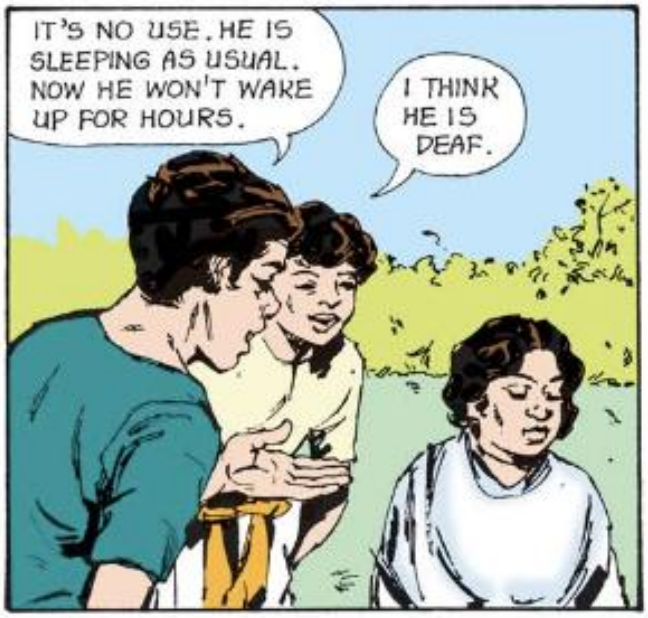


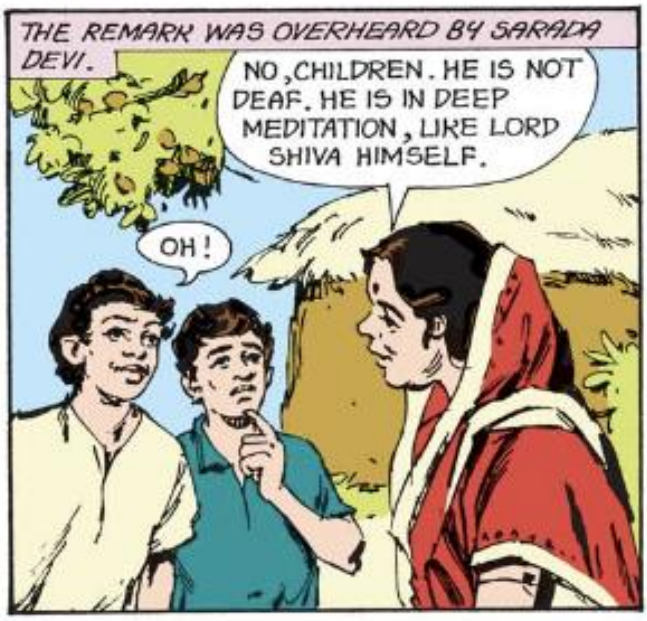


* A CHILD'S INITIATION TO NORMAL FOOD AT SIX MONTHS. • WEDNESDAY.

VINOD LED A CAREFREE CHILDHOOD IN BAJITPUR, GOING TO SCHOOL AND PLAYING WITH HIS FRIENDS. BUT OFTEN, WHEN THE OTHERS PLAYED —
LOOK ! THERE'S VINOD SITTING UNDER THAT TREE.
LET'S ASK HIM TO JOIN OUR GAME.

VINOD ! HEY, VINOD.


IT'S NO USE. HE IS SLEEPING AS USUAL. NOW HE WON'T WAKE UP FOR HOURS.
I THINK HE IS DEAF.


THE REMARK WAS OVERHEARD BY SARADA DEVI.
NO, CHILDREN. HE IS NOT DEAF. HE IS IN DEEP MEDITATION, LIKE LORD SHIVA HIMSELF.
OH !

ALTHOUGH A MERE BOY, VINOD POSSESSED A KEEN AND QUESTIONING MIND. ONE DAY —
MOTHER CLEANS THE ALTAR AROUND THE TULSI PLANT EVERY DAY AND LIGHTS A LAMP BEFORE IT. WHY DOES SHE CARE SO MUCH FOR IT ? I WONDER IF....

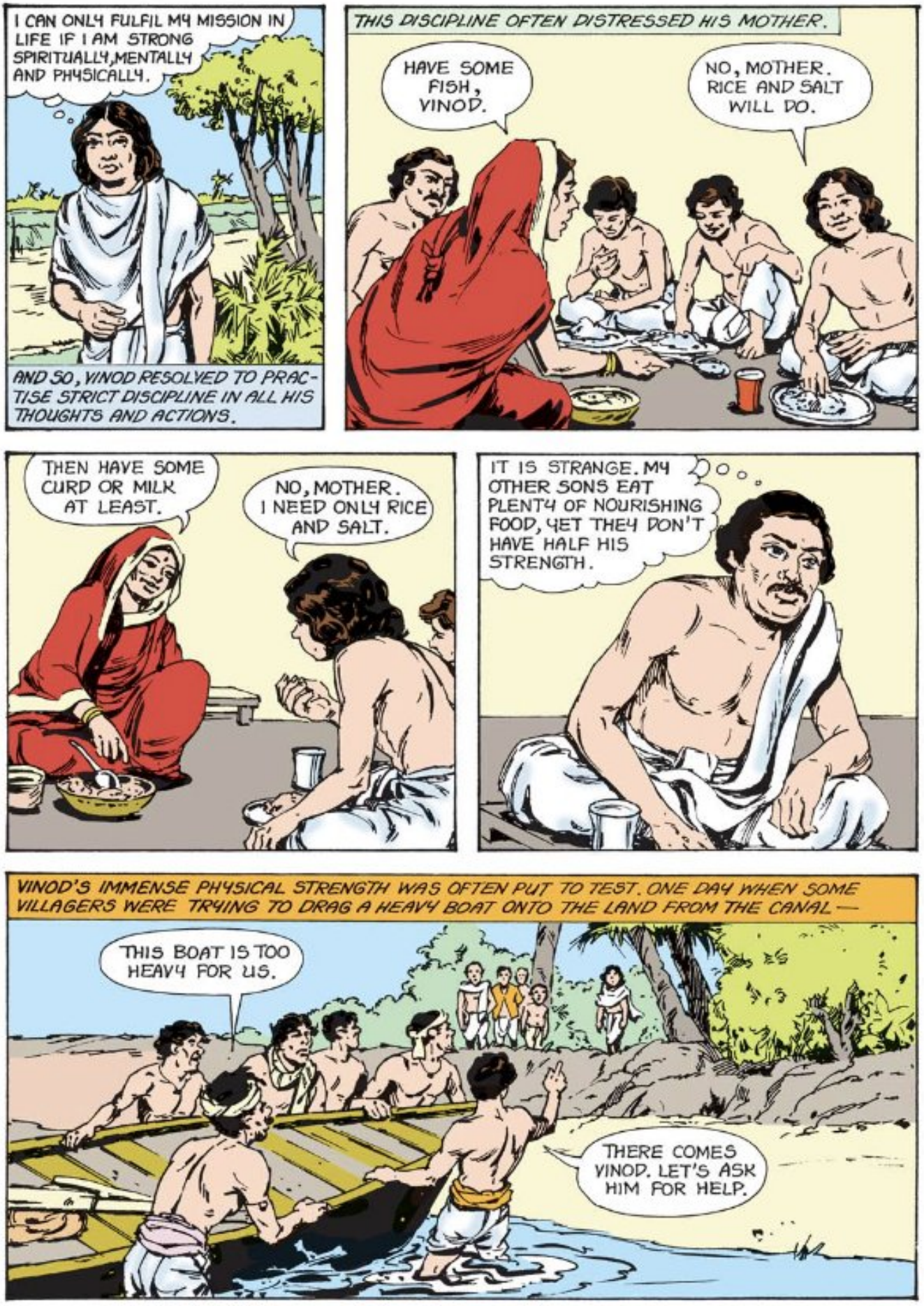
SOON AFTERWARDS —
MA! COME QUICKLY! VINOD HAS FAINTED ON THE TERRACE.
WHEN VINOD REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS —
WHAT HAPPENED, VINOD?
I SPAT ON THE TULSI PLANT TO SEE IF GOD LIVES THERE. THEN I FELT AS IF THE RADIANT FIGURE OF LORD VISHNU HAD ENTERED MY BODY... AND I FAINTED!
VINOD REMAINED IN DEEP THOUGHT AFTER THIS INCIDENT.
VISHNU IS THE LORD OF PROTECTION, WHO SAID, "I REINCARNATE MYSELF TO DESTROY EVIL AND RE-ESTABLISH THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS." COULD IT MEAN THAT I HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO FIGHT THE EVILS OF TODAY?
A FEW YEARS LATER, WHEN VINOD BECAME A TEENAGER, ANOTHER INCIDENT OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF THE DURGA PUJA CELEBRATIONS.
WHY DO PEOPLE WORSHIP A CLAY IDOL WITH SO MUCH POMP AND CEREMONY?
I MUST SEE FOR MYSELF WHETHER THE MOTHER GODDESS LIVES IN THE IDOL.

SO AFTER MIDNIGHT WHEN EVERYONE HAD LEFT THE PUJA PANDAL —
IF YOU ARE REAL, O MOTHER GODDESS, COME OUT OF THE IDOL AND STAND BEFORE ME. OR ELSE I WILL NOT PRAY TO YOU.

THEN VINOD FELL INTO A TRANCE...
... AND FELT HER DIVINE PRESENCE.

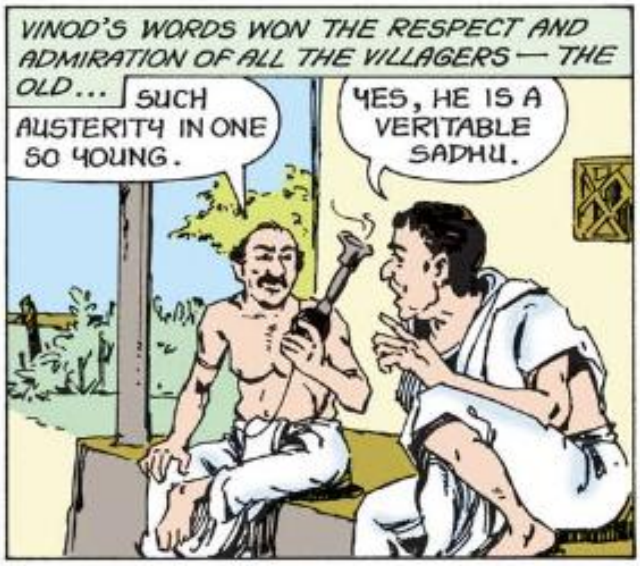
MUCH LATER —
OUR PURANAS SAY THAT ALL THE DEVAS CONTRIBUTED THEIR INDIVIDUAL POWERS TO MA DURGA TO SLAY THE EVIL DEMON, MAHISHASURA. I FEEL SHE HAS BLESSED ME WITH SOME OF THAT AWESOME POWER.

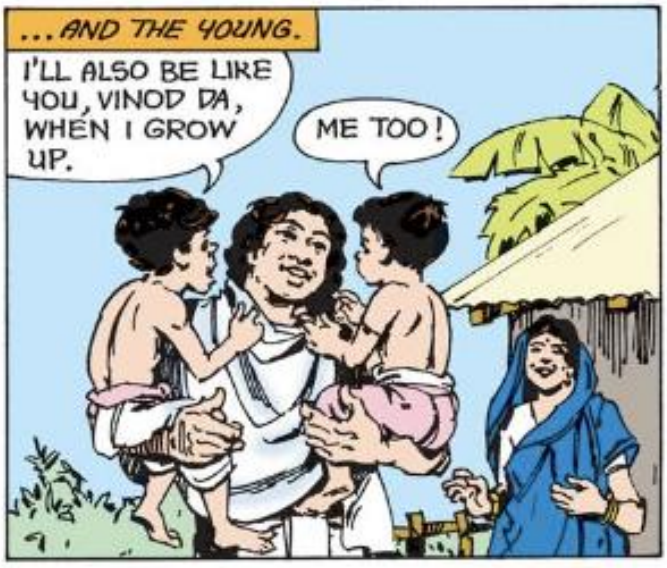
VINOD NOW HAD NO DOUBTS ABOUT HIS DIVINE MISSION IN LIFE.
I AM THE CHOSEN ONE. I AM CONVINCED MY PURPOSE IN LIFE IS TO RE-AWAKEN OUR PEOPLE, TO DESTROY EVIL AND TO RE-ESTABLISH THE WAYS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

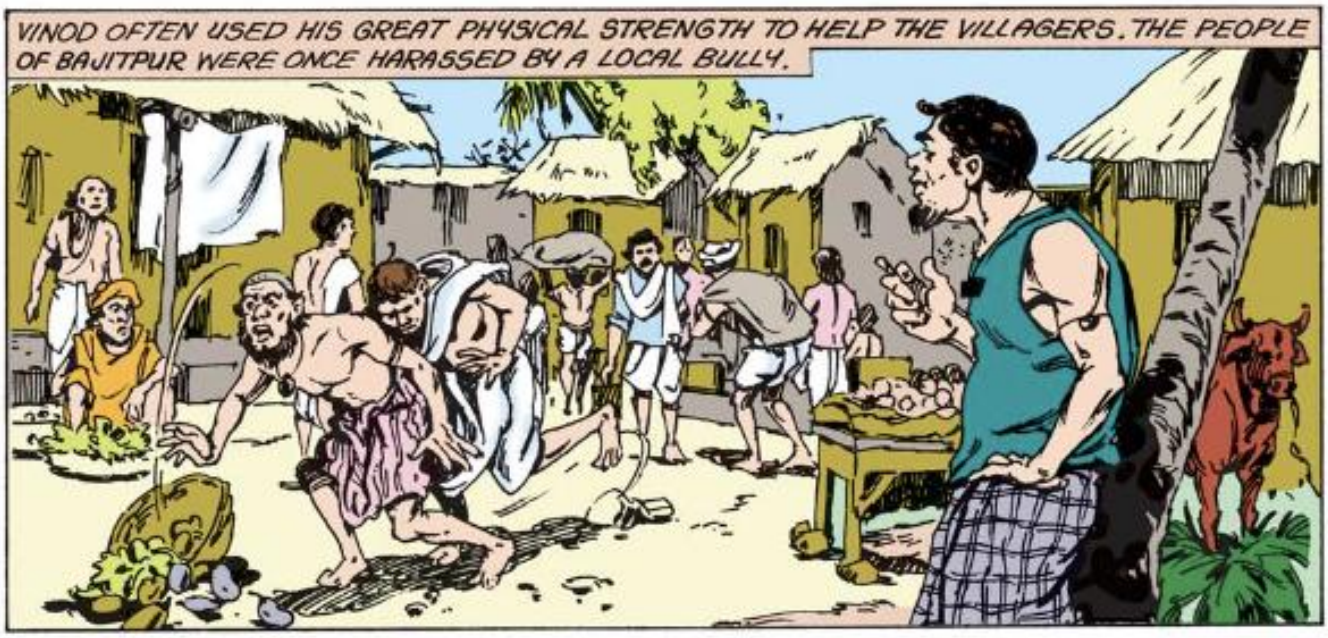

I CAN ONLY FULFIL MY MISSION IN LIFE IF I AM STRONG SPIRITUALLY, MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.
AND SO, VINOD RESOLVED TO PRACTISE STRICT DISCIPLINE IN ALL HIS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.
THIS DISCIPLINE OFTEN DISTRESSED HIS MOTHER.
HAVE SOME FISH, VINOD.
NO, MOTHER. RICE AND SALT WILL DO.
THEN HAVE SOME CURD OR MILK AT LEAST.
NO, MOTHER. I NEED ONLY RICE AND SALT.
IT IS STRANGE. MY OTHER SONS EAT PLENTY OF NOURISHING FOOD, YET THEY DON'T HAVE HALF HIS STRENGTH.
VINOD'S IMMENSE PHYSICAL STRENGTH WAS OFTEN PUT TO TEST. ONE DAY WHEN SOME VILLAGERS WERE TRYING TO DRAG A HEAVY BOAT ONTO THE LAND FROM THE CANAL—
THIS BOAT IS TOO HEAVY FOR US.
THERE COMES VINOD. LET'S ASK HIM FOR HELP.

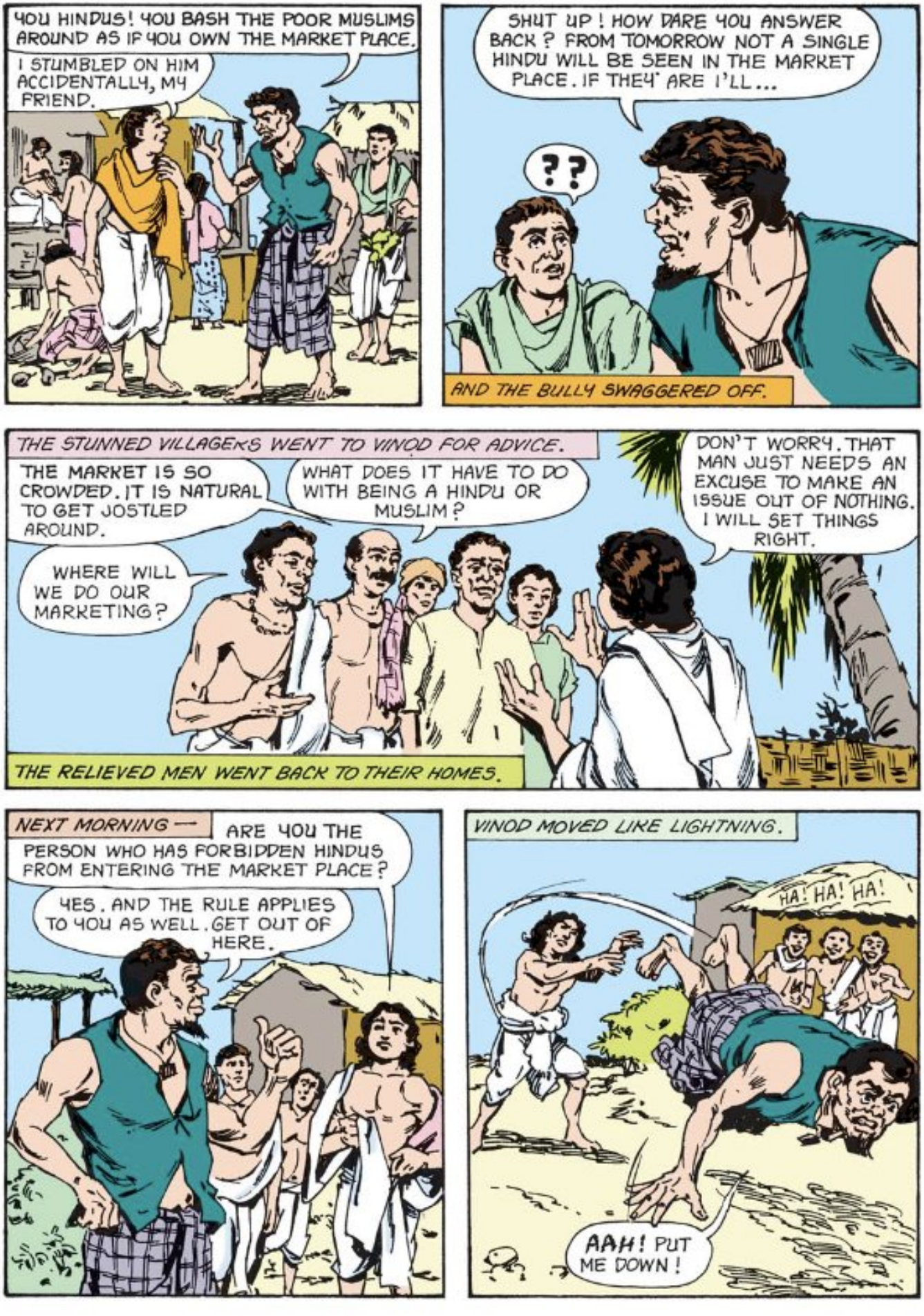
HEY, VINOD! CAN YOU MOVE THIS BOAT FOR US?
WE'VE HEARD YOU ARE AS STRONG AS AN ELEPHANT.
IN ANSWER, VINOD DRAGGED THE BOAT EFFORTLESSLY.
HE'S DONE IT SINGLE-HANDEDLY.
THERE ARE SO MANY OF US IN THE VILLAGE WHO EAT BETTER FOOD THAN YOU DO, VINOD, AND ALSO EXCERCISE REGULARLY. YET YOU ARE STRONGER THAN ANY OF US.
THAT'S BECAUSE I RETAIN WHATEVER I ACQUIRE.
??
??
VINOD EXPLAINED—
YOU ALLOW THE ENERGY YOU GET FROM EATING RICH FOOD TO DRAIN AWAY FROM YOUR BODY WITH USELESS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.

YOU MUST CONTROL YOUR MIND AND ACTIONS. TALK ONLY WHEN YOU NEED TO. ALWAYS DO SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE. DON'T EAT FOOD THAT IS HARD TO DIGEST. SLEEP ONLY AT NIGHT AND THAT TOO FOR NOT MORE THAN A FEW HOURS.

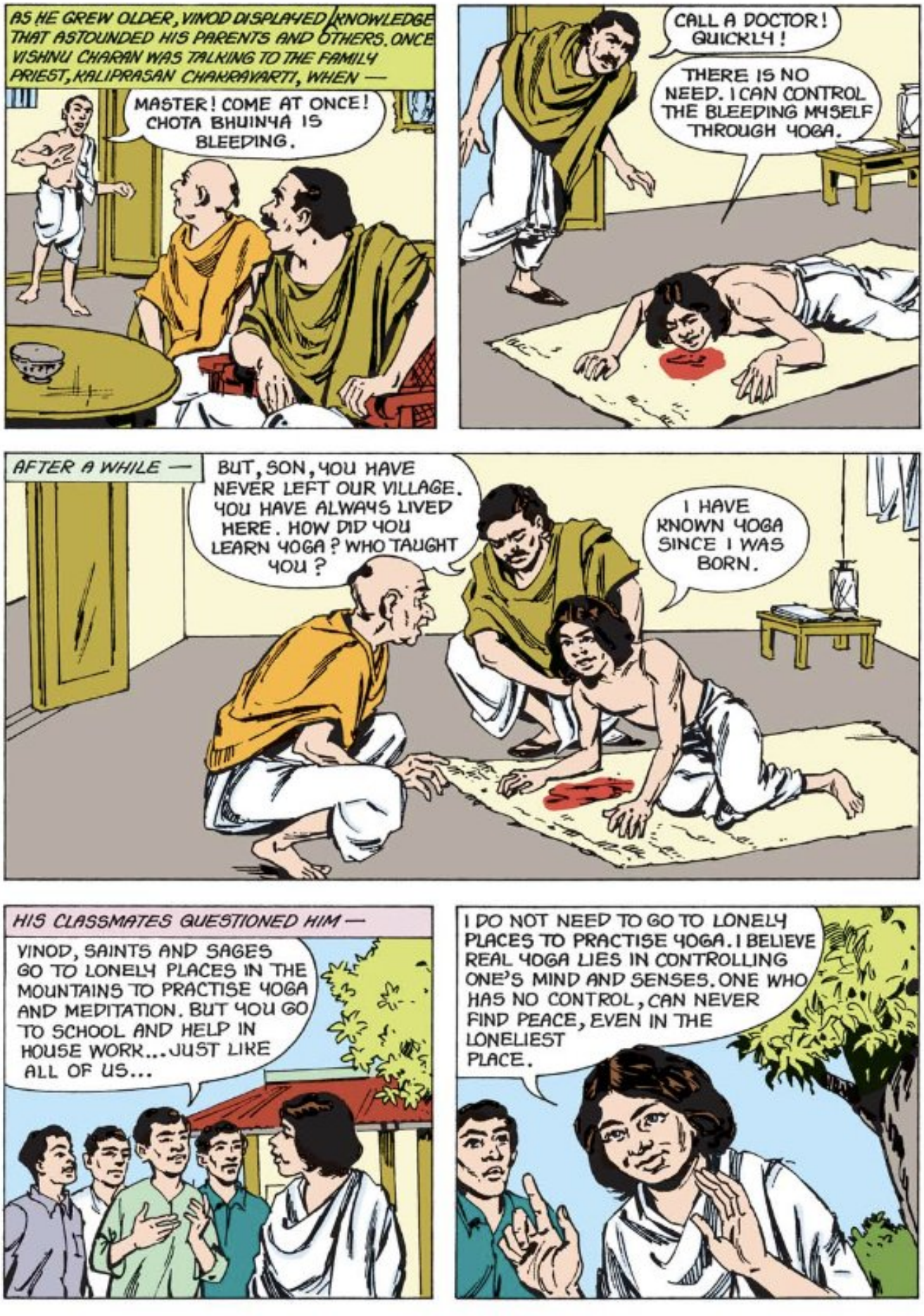

VINOD'S WORDS WON THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF ALL THE VILLAGERS — THE OLD...
SUCH AUSTERITY IN ONE SO YOUNG.
YES, HE IS A VERITABLE SADHU.

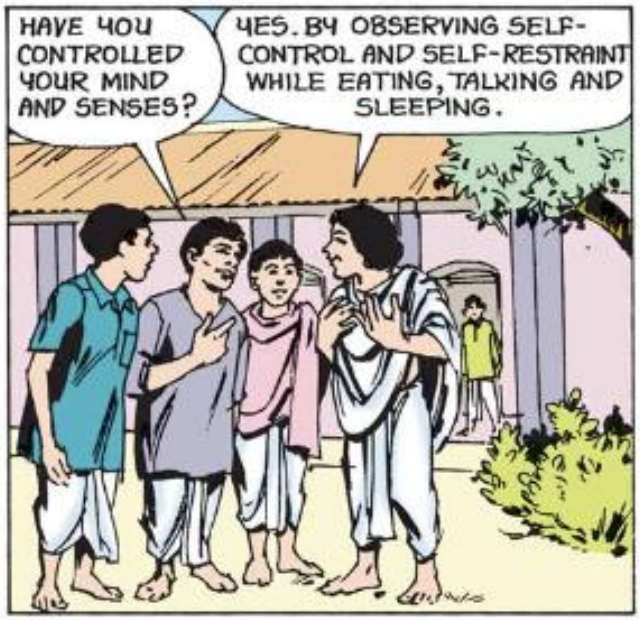

...AND THE YOUNG.
I'LL ALSO BE LIKE YOU, VINOD DA, WHEN I GROW UP.
ME TOO!


VINOD OFTEN USED HIS GREAT PHYSICAL STRENGTH TO HELP THE VILLAGERS. THE PEOPLE OF BAJITPUR WERE ONCE HARASSED BY A LOCAL BULLY.


YOU HINDUS! YOU BASH THE POOR MUSLIMS AROUND AS IF YOU OWN THE MARKET PLACE.
I STUMBLED ON HIM ACCIDENTALLY, MY FRIEND.
SHUT UP! HOW DARE YOU ANSWER BACK? FROM TOMORROW NOT A SINGLE HINDU WILL BE SEEN IN THE MARKET PLACE. IF THEY ARE I'LL...
??
AND THE BULLY SWAGGERED OFF.
THE STUNNED VILLAGERS WENT TO VINOD FOR ADVICE.
THE MARKET IS SO CROWDED. IT IS NATURAL TO GET JOSTLED AROUND.
WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH BEING A HINDU OR MUSLIM?
WHERE WILL WE DO OUR MARKETING?
DON'T WORRY. THAT MAN JUST NEEDS AN EXCUSE TO MAKE AN ISSUE OUT OF NOTHING. I WILL SET THINGS RIGHT.
THE RELIEVED MEN WENT BACK TO THEIR HOMES.
NEXT MORNING —
ARE YOU THE PERSON WHO HAS FORBIDDEN HINDUS FROM ENTERING THE MARKET PLACE?
YES. AND THE RULE APPLIES TO YOU AS WELL. GET OUT OF HERE.
VINOD MOVED LIKE LIGHTNING.
HA! HA! HA!
AAH! PUT ME DOWN!

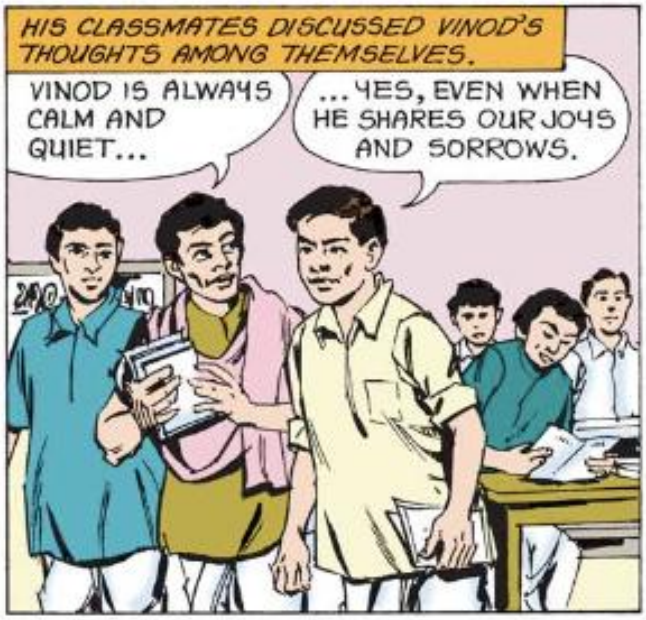
BUT VINOD, FOR ALL HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH HAD A SOFT HEART. HE WAS ESPECIALLY DEVOTED TO HIS MOTHER.
OH VINOD! A MONGOOSE MESSES UP MY KITCHEN EVERY DAY. CAN'T YOU CATCH IT AND BRING IT TO ME?
I WILL, MOTHER.
VINOD TRACKED THE MONGOOSE DEEP INTO THE JUNGLE.
OUCH! THESE THORNS HURT. BUT I'LL CATCH YOU STILL, LITTLE MONGOOSE. MA HAS ASKED ME TO.
AND LATER —
HERE YOU ARE, MA. BUT SHALL WE LET IT GO? AFTER ALL, IT IS A HARMLESS CREATURE.
OF COURSE, VINOD. JUST RELEASE IT FAR AWAY FROM HERE.
ANOTHER DAY —
HEY, VINOD! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING THAT BOWL OF MILK?
THERE IS A WOUNDED IGUANA IN THE FOREST. I AM GOING TO FEED IT.
AND A FEW DAYS LATER —
MA! THE IGUANA IS WELL. IT RAN AWAY INTO THE JUNGLE.
WHAT A KIND HEART HE HAS.

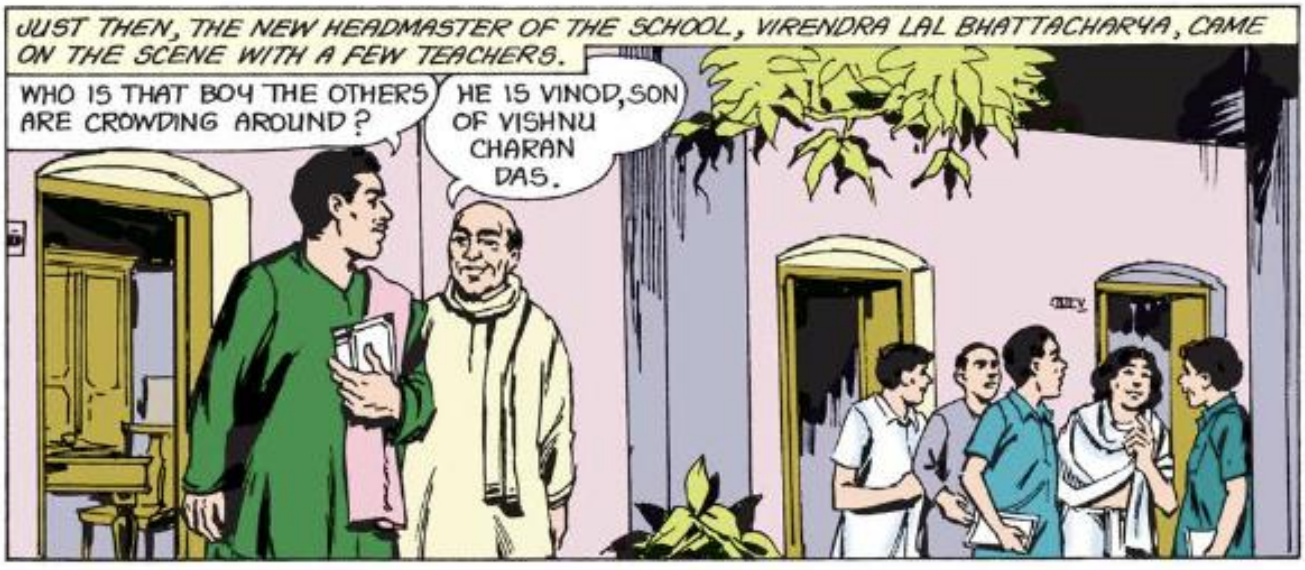

AS HE GREW OLDER, VINOD DISPLAYED KNOWLEDGE THAT ASTOUNDED HIS PARENTS AND OTHERS. ONCE VISHNU CHARAN WAS TALKING TO THE FAMILY PRIEST, KALIPRASAN CHAKRAVARTI, WHEN —
MASTER! COME AT ONCE! CHOTA BHUINYA IS BLEEDING.
CALL A DOCTOR! QUICKLY!
THERE IS NO NEED. I CAN CONTROL THE BLEEDING MYSELF THROUGH YOGA.
AFTER A WHILE —
BUT, SON, YOU HAVE NEVER LEFT OUR VILLAGE. YOU HAVE ALWAYS LIVED HERE. HOW DID YOU LEARN YOGA? WHO TAUGHT YOU?
I HAVE KNOWN YOGA SINCE I WAS BORN.
HIS CLASSMATES QUESTIONED HIM —
VINOD, SAINTS AND SAGES GO TO LONELY PLACES IN THE MOUNTAINS TO PRACTISE YOGA AND MEDITATION. BUT YOU GO TO SCHOOL AND HELP IN HOUSE WORK... JUST LIKE ALL OF US...
I DO NOT NEED TO GO TO LONELY PLACES TO PRACTISE YOGA. I BELIEVE REAL YOGA LIES IN CONTROLLING ONE'S MIND AND SENSES. ONE WHO HAS NO CONTROL, CAN NEVER FIND PEACE, EVEN IN THE LONELIEST PLACE.

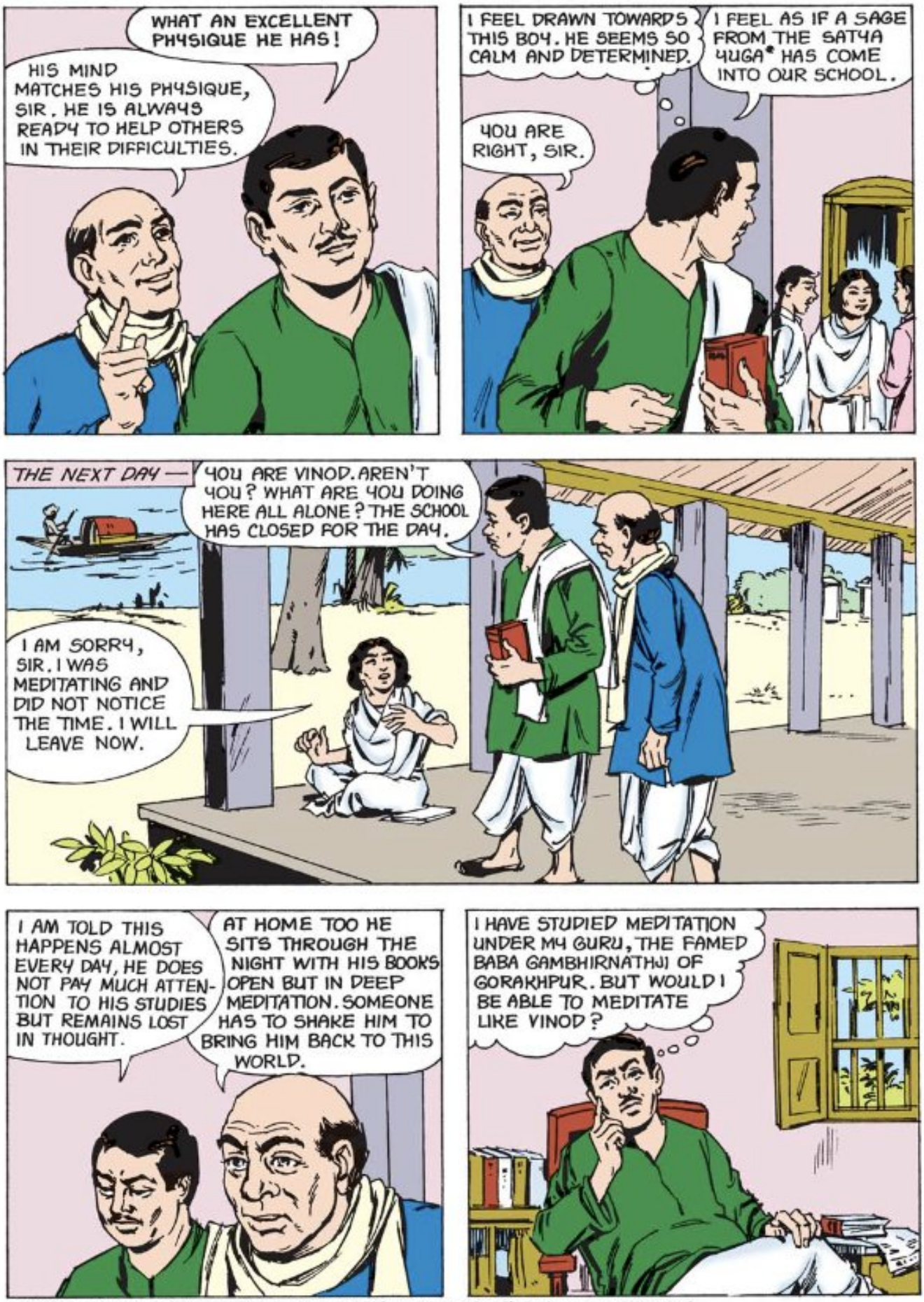

HAVE YOU CONTROLLED YOUR MIND AND SENSES?
YES. BY OBSERVING SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-RESTRAINT WHILE EATING, TALKING AND SLEEPING.

CAN WE ATTAIN GOD BY THAT?
YES. YOU CAN NOT ONLY ATTAIN GOD, YOU CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO GOD-LIKE CREATURES.

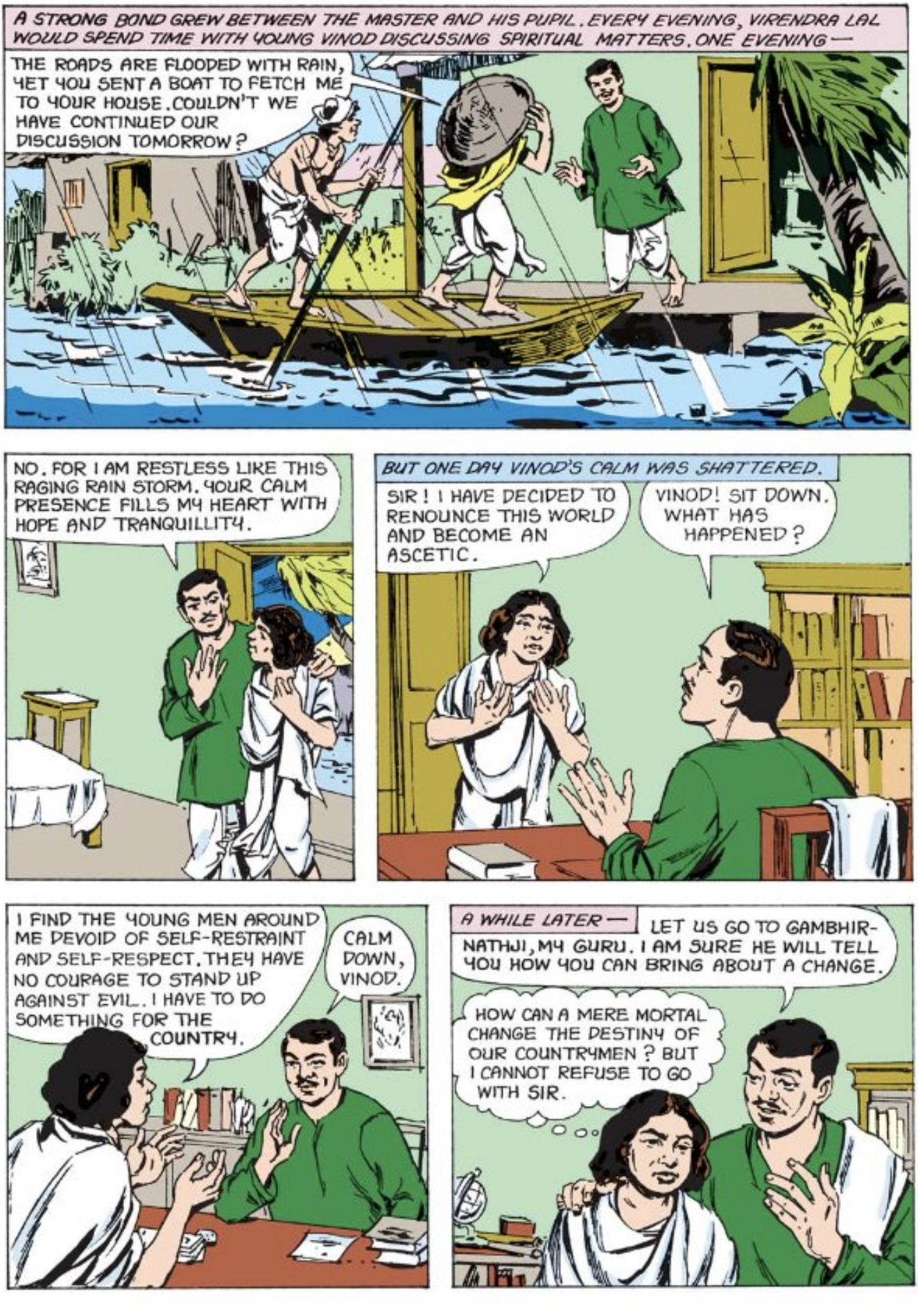
GOD RESIDES IN EVERY HUMAN BEING. ONLY IF THE MIND BECOMES STEADY AND SERENE WITH THE PRACTICE OF SELF-CONTROL CAN MAN FIND HIS TRUE SELF.

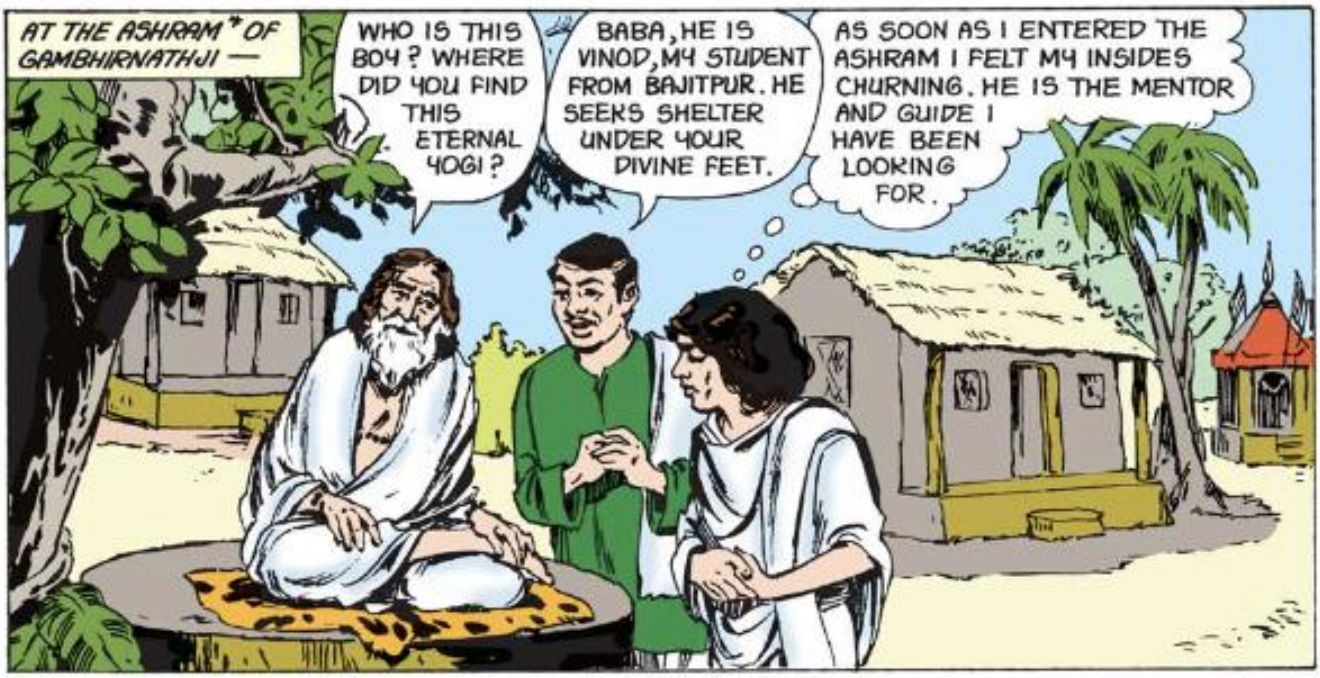

HIS CLASSMATES DISCUSSED VINOD'S THOUGHTS AMONG THEMSELVES.
VINOD IS ALWAYS CALM AND QUIET...
...YES, EVEN WHEN HE SHARES OUR JOYS AND SORROWS.

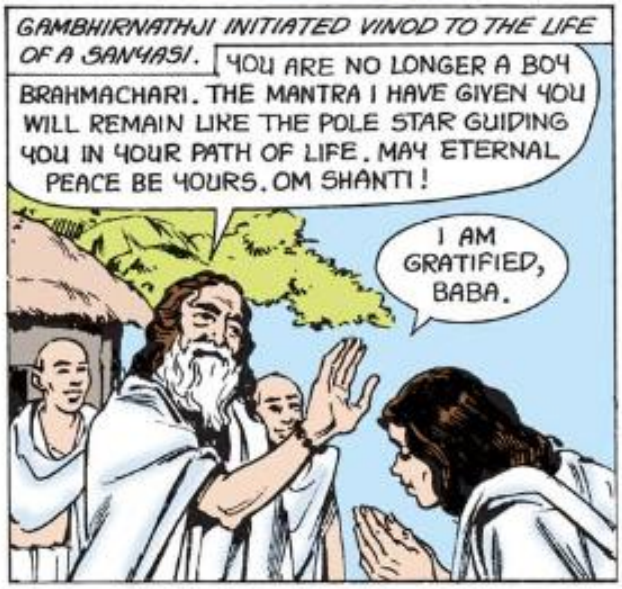

JUST THEN, THE NEW HEADMASTER OF THE SCHOOL, VIRENDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA, CAME ON THE SCENE WITH A FEW TEACHERS.
WHO IS THAT BOY THE OTHERS ARE CROWDING AROUND?
HE IS VINOD, SON OF VISHNU CHARAN DAS.

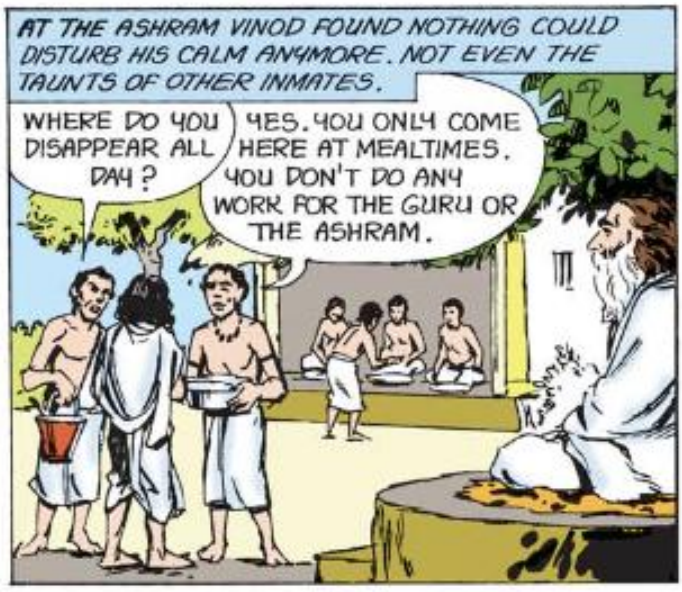


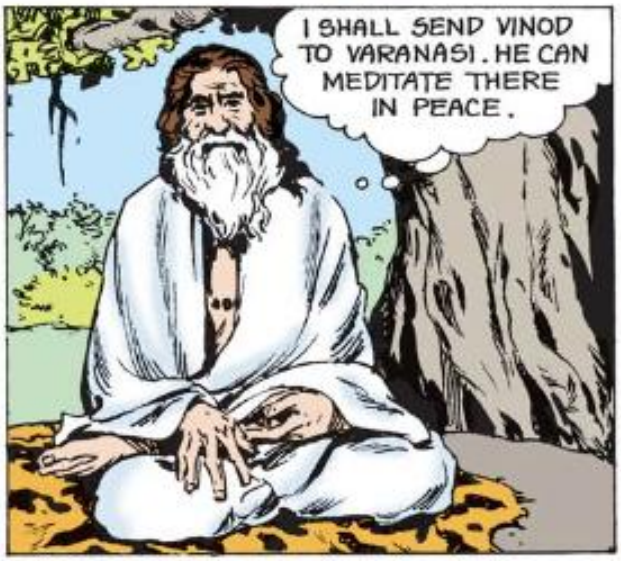
* ACCORDING TO HINDU MYTHOLOGY, THE WORLD GOES THROUGH A CYCLE OF FOUR ERAS. SATYA YUGA, THE ERA OF TRUTH, IS THE BEST WHEN ALL ARE HONEST AND SAINTLY.


A STRONG BOND GREW BETWEEN THE MASTER AND HIS PUPIL. EVERY EVENING, VIRENDRA LAL WOULD SPEND TIME WITH YOUNG VINOD DISCUSSING SPIRITUAL MATTERS. ONE EVENING —
THE ROADS ARE FLOODED WITH RAIN, YET YOU SENT A BOAT TO FETCH ME TO YOUR HOUSE. COULDN'T WE HAVE CONTINUED OUR DISCUSSION TOMORROW?
NO. FOR I AM RESTLESS LIKE THIS RAGING RAIN STORM. YOUR CALM PRESENCE FILLS MY HEART WITH HOPE AND TRANQUILLITY.
BUT ONE DAY VINOD'S CALM WAS SHATTERED.
SIR! I HAVE DECIDED TO RENOUNCE THIS WORLD AND BECOME AN ASCETIC.
VINOD! SIT DOWN. WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
I FIND THE YOUNG MEN AROUND ME DEVOID OF SELF-RESTRAINT AND SELF-RESPECT. THEY HAVE NO COURAGE TO STAND UP AGAINST EVIL. I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FOR THE COUNTRY.
CALM DOWN, VINOD.
A WHILE LATER —
LET US GO TO GAMBHIR-NATHJI, MY GURU. I AM SURE HE WILL TELL YOU HOW YOU CAN BRING ABOUT A CHANGE.
HOW CAN A MERE MORTAL CHANGE THE DESTINY OF OUR COUNTRYMEN? BUT I CANNOT REFUSE TO GO WITH SIR.


AT THE ASHRAM* OF GAMBHIRNATHJI —
WHO IS THIS BOY? WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS ETERNAL YOGI?
BABA, HE IS VINOD, MY STUDENT FROM BAJITPUR. HE SEEKS SHELTER UNDER YOUR DIVINE FEET.
AS SOON AS I ENTERED THE ASHRAM I FELT MY INSIDES CHURNING. HE IS THE MENTOR AND GUIDE I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR.


GAMBHIRNATHJI INITIATED VINOD TO THE LIFE OF A SANYASI.
YOU ARE NO LONGER A BOY BRAHMACHARI. THE MANTRA I HAVE GIVEN YOU WILL REMAIN LIKE THE POLE STAR GUIDING YOU IN YOUR PATH OF LIFE. MAY ETERNAL PEACE BE YOURS. OM SHANTI!
I AM GRATIFIED, BABA.

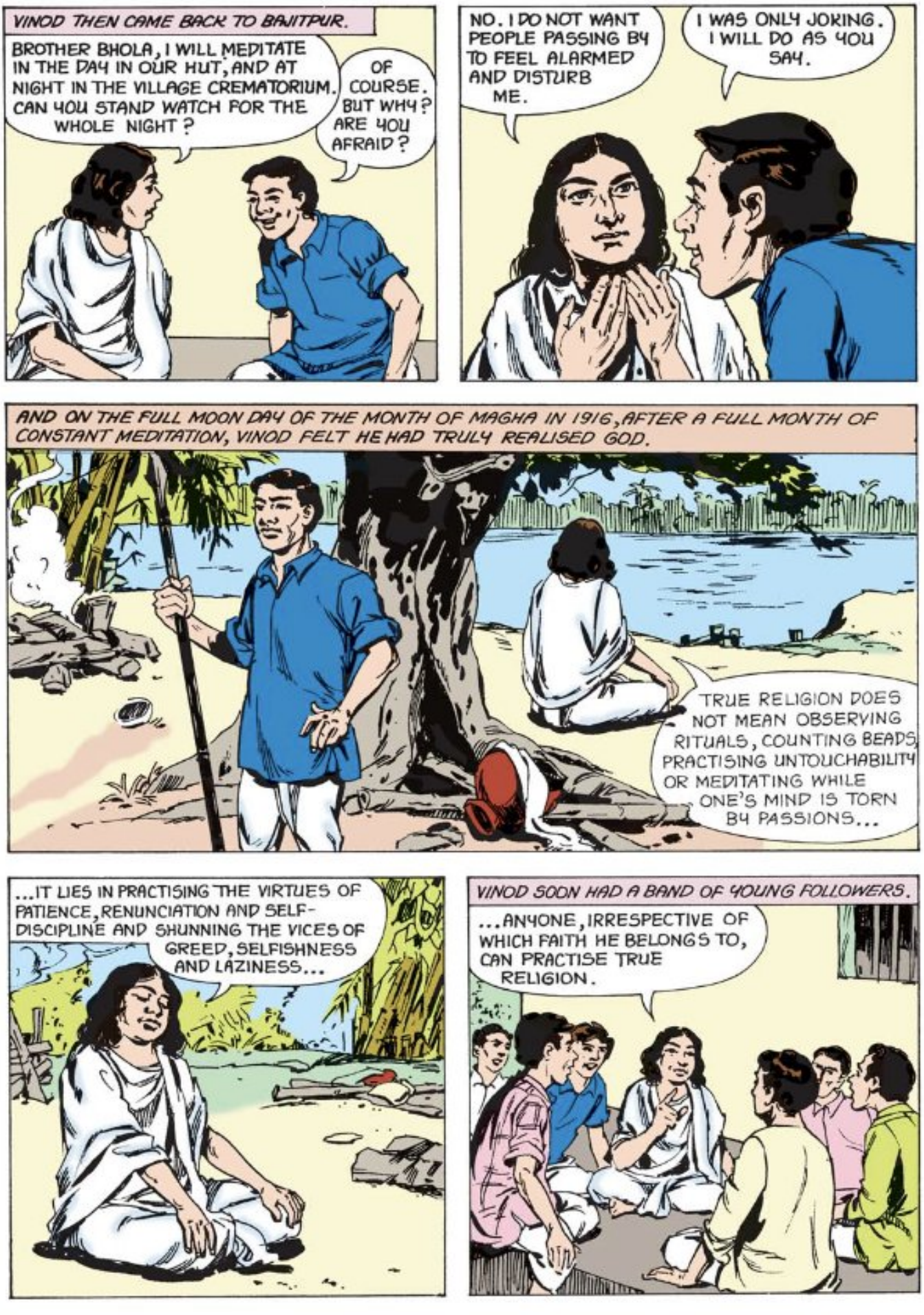

AT THE ASHRAM VINOD FOUND NOTHING COULD DISTURB HIS CALM ANYMORE. NOT EVEN THE TAUNTS OF OTHER INMATES.
WHERE DO YOU DISAPPEAR ALL DAY?
YES. YOU ONLY COME HERE AT MEALTIMES. YOU DON'T DO ANY WORK FOR THE GURU OR THE ASHRAM.

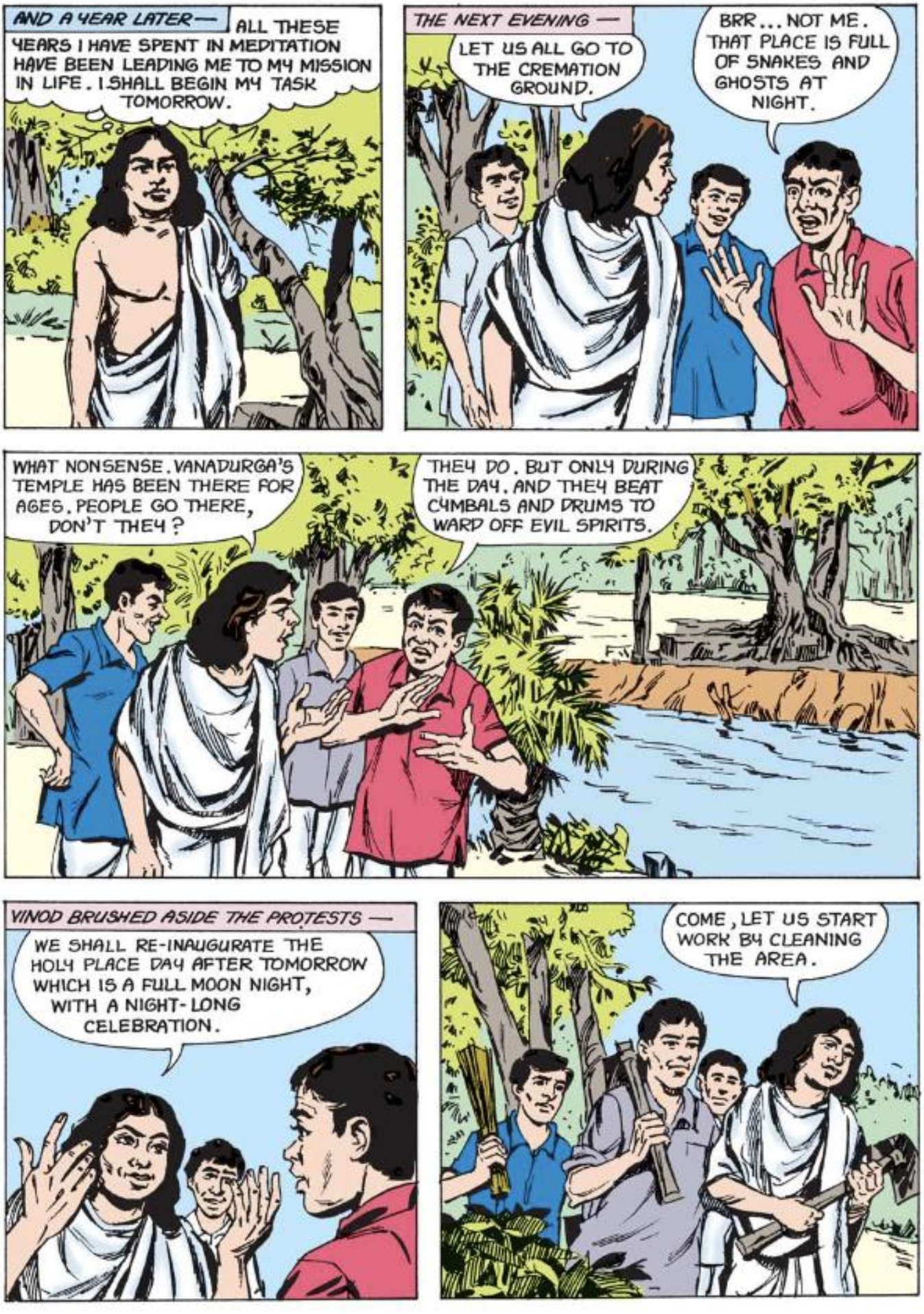

I SHALL SEND VINOD TO VARANASI. HE CAN MEDITATE THERE IN PEACE.

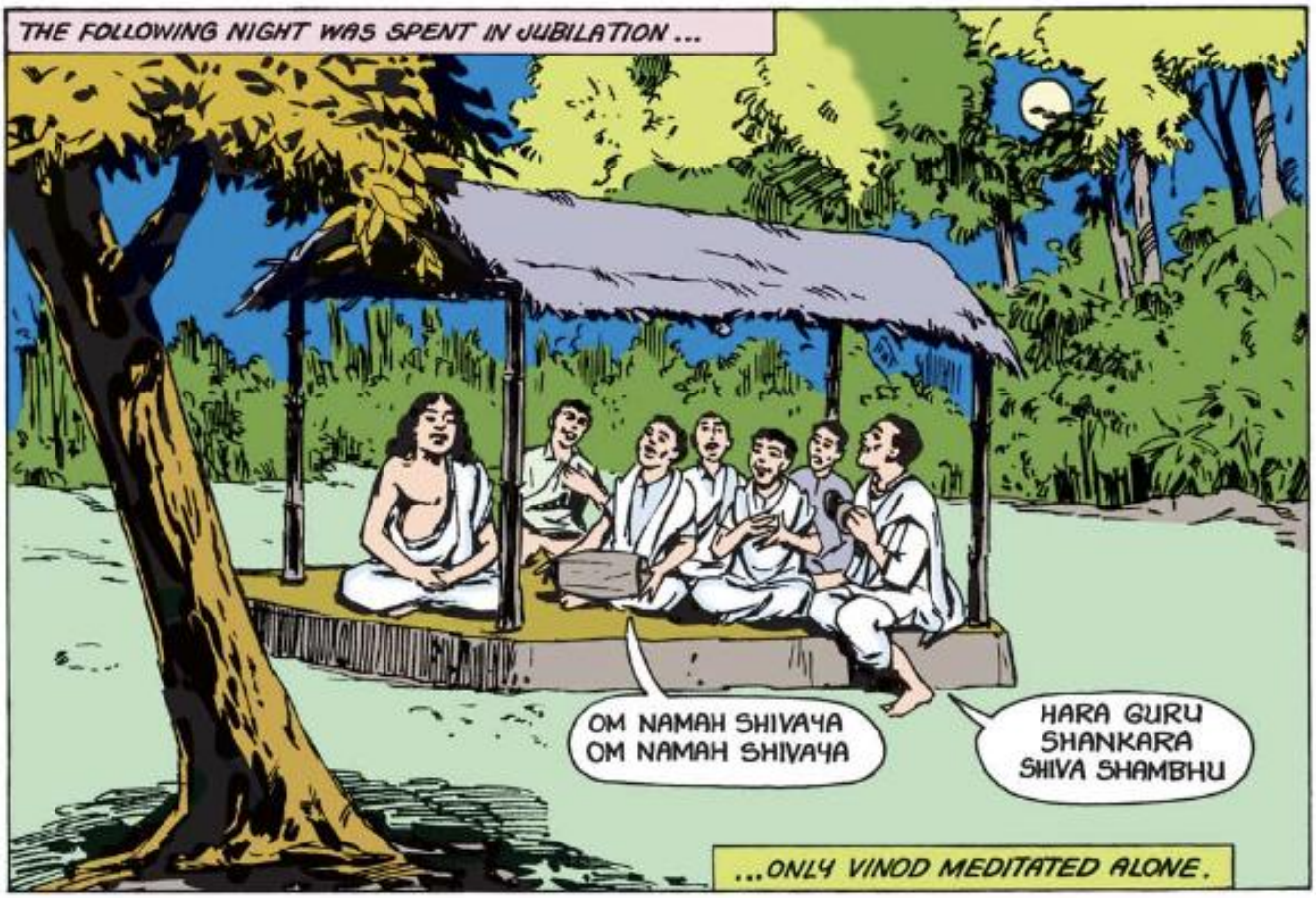
SO VINOD CHOSE THE LONELY AND SERENE ASI GHAT IN VARANASI FOR HIS MEDITATION.

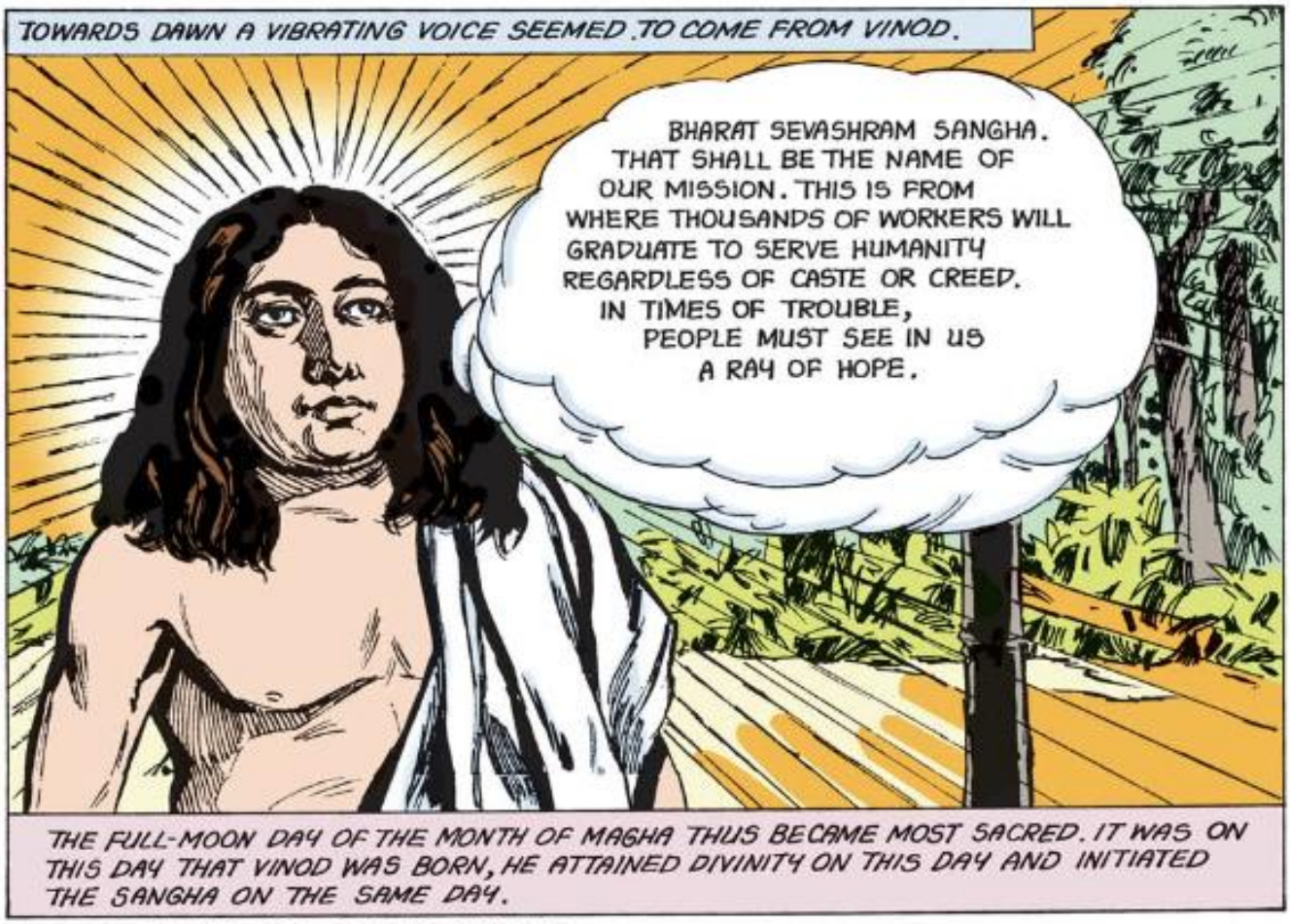
* HERMITAGE

ONE DAY —
BABA! IS THIS A MIRACLE? I WAS PRAYING TO SEE YOU.
IF YOU PRAY WITH FULL DEVOTION, YOU WILL GET WHATEVER YOU DESIRE.
BABA! I WISH TO ACQUIRE THE ASHTASIDDHI, THE EIGHT-FOLD YOGIC PATH TO SUCCESS.
THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR THAT. CONTINUE WITH YOUR MEDITATION.
DAYS LATER —
MASTER! AM I NOT READY TO WITNESS THE ASHTASIDDHI?
NO. CONTINUE WITH YOUR MEDITATION.
AT LAST, ONE DAY —
VINOD, I AM GOING TO CONFER THE SIDDHI ON YOU. AS SOON AS YOU GET IT, YOU BECOME ALL-POWERFUL AND CAN DO WHATEVER YOU LIKE...
... BUT REMEMBER NEVER USE THIS POWER FOR TRIVIAL ISSUES. YOUR AIM IS TO REBUILD THE NATION. THAT IS YOUR MISSION ON EARTH.

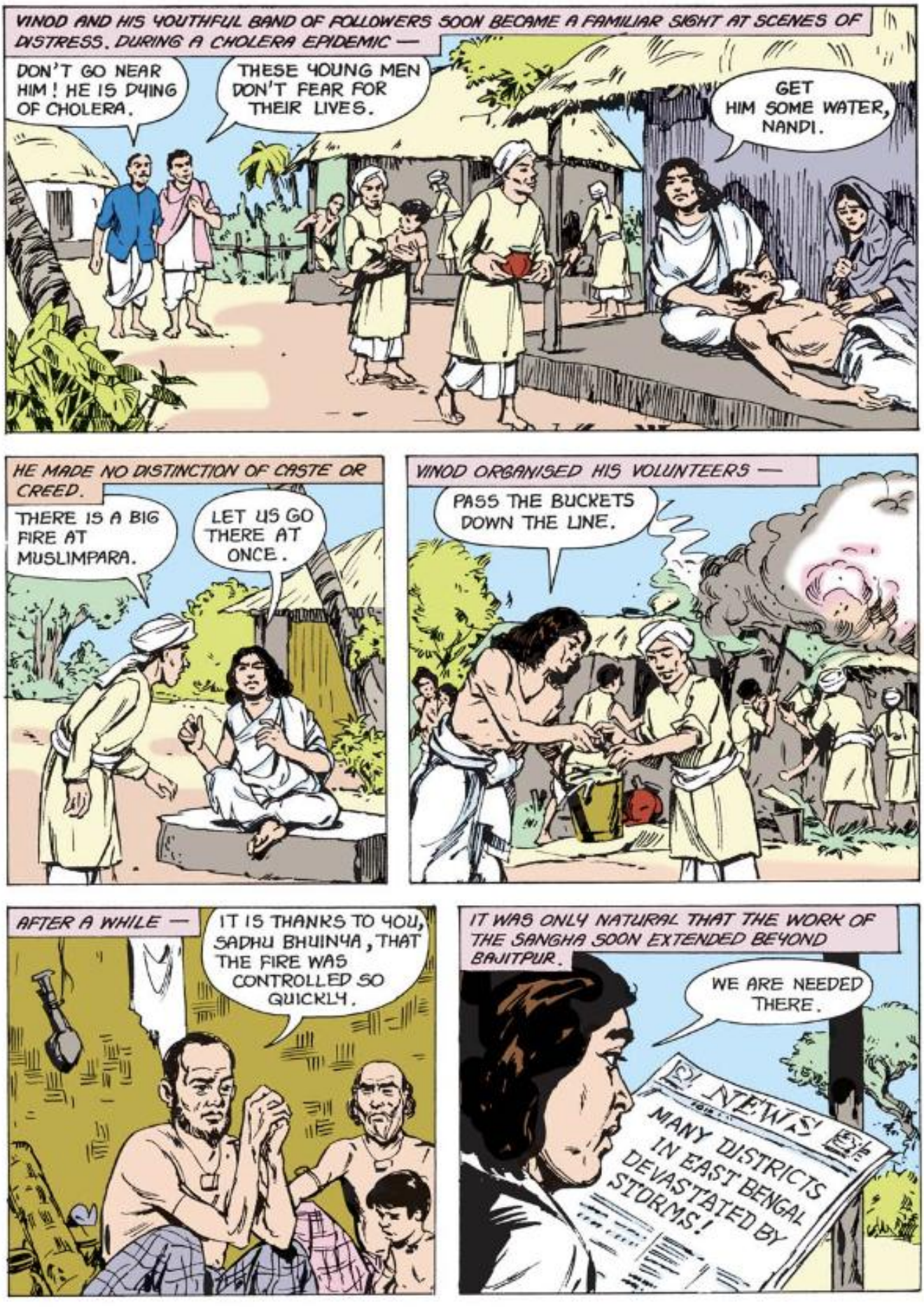

VINOD THEN CAME BACK TO BAIJTPUR.
BROTHER BHOLA, I WILL MEDITATE IN THE DAY IN OUR HUT, AND AT NIGHT IN THE VILLAGE CREMATORIUM. CAN YOU STAND WATCH FOR THE WHOLE NIGHT?
OF COURSE. BUT WHY? ARE YOU AFRAID?
NO. I DO NOT WANT PEOPLE PASSING BY TO FEEL ALARMED AND DISTURB ME.
I WAS ONLY JOKING. I WILL DO AS YOU SAY.
AND ON THE FULL MOON DAY OF THE MONTH OF MAGHA IN 1916, AFTER A FULL MONTH OF CONSTANT MEDITATION, VINOD FELT HE HAD TRULY REALISED GOD.
TRUE RELIGION DOES NOT MEAN OBSERVING RITUALS, COUNTING BEADS, PRACTISING UNTOUCHABILITY OR MEDITATING WHILE ONE'S MIND IS TORN BY PASSIONS...
...IT LIES IN PRACTISING THE VIRTUES OF PATIENCE, RENUNCIATION AND SELF-DISCIPLINE AND SHUNNING THE VICES OF GREED, SELFISHNESS AND LAZINESS...
VINOD SOON HAD A BAND OF YOUNG FOLLOWERS.
...ANYONE, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHICH FAITH HE BELONGS TO, CAN PRACTISE TRUE RELIGION.

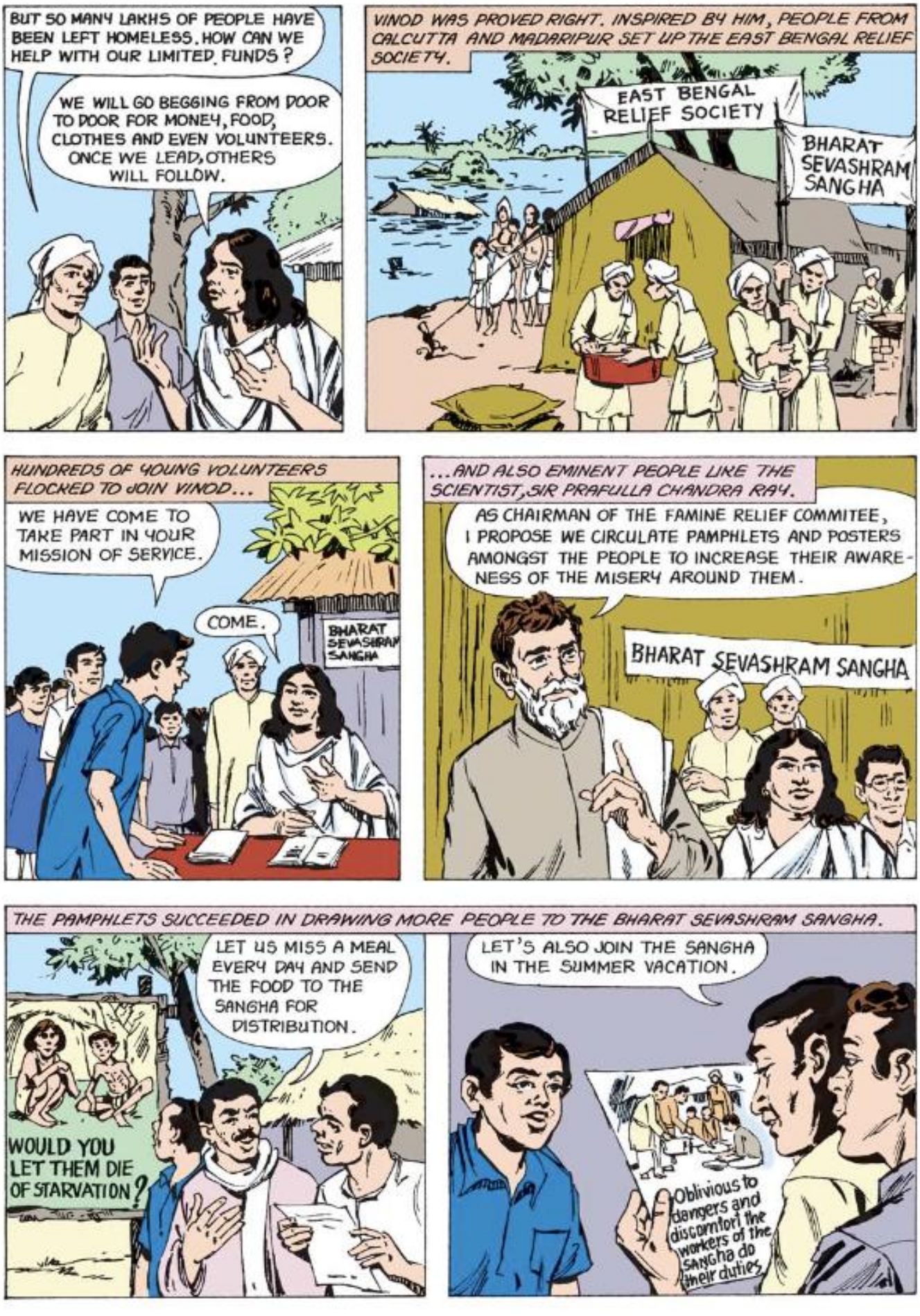

AND A YEAR LATER—
ALL THESE YEARS I HAVE SPENT IN MEDITATION HAVE BEEN LEADING ME TO MY MISSION IN LIFE. I SHALL BEGIN MY TASK TOMORROW.
THE NEXT EVENING —
LET US ALL GO TO THE CREMATION GROUND.
BRR... NOT ME. THAT PLACE IS FULL OF SNAKES AND GHOSTS AT NIGHT.
WHAT NONSENSE. VANADURGA'S TEMPLE HAS BEEN THERE FOR AGES. PEOPLE GO THERE, DON'T THEY?
THEY DO. BUT ONLY DURING THE DAY. AND THEY BEAT CYMBALS AND DRUMS TO WARD OFF EVIL SPIRITS.
VINOD BRUSHED ASIDE THE PROTESTS —
WE SHALL RE-INAUGURATE THE HOLY PLACE DAY AFTER TOMORROW WHICH IS A FULL MOON NIGHT, WITH A NIGHT-LONG CELEBRATION.
COME, LET US START WORK BY CLEANING THE AREA.

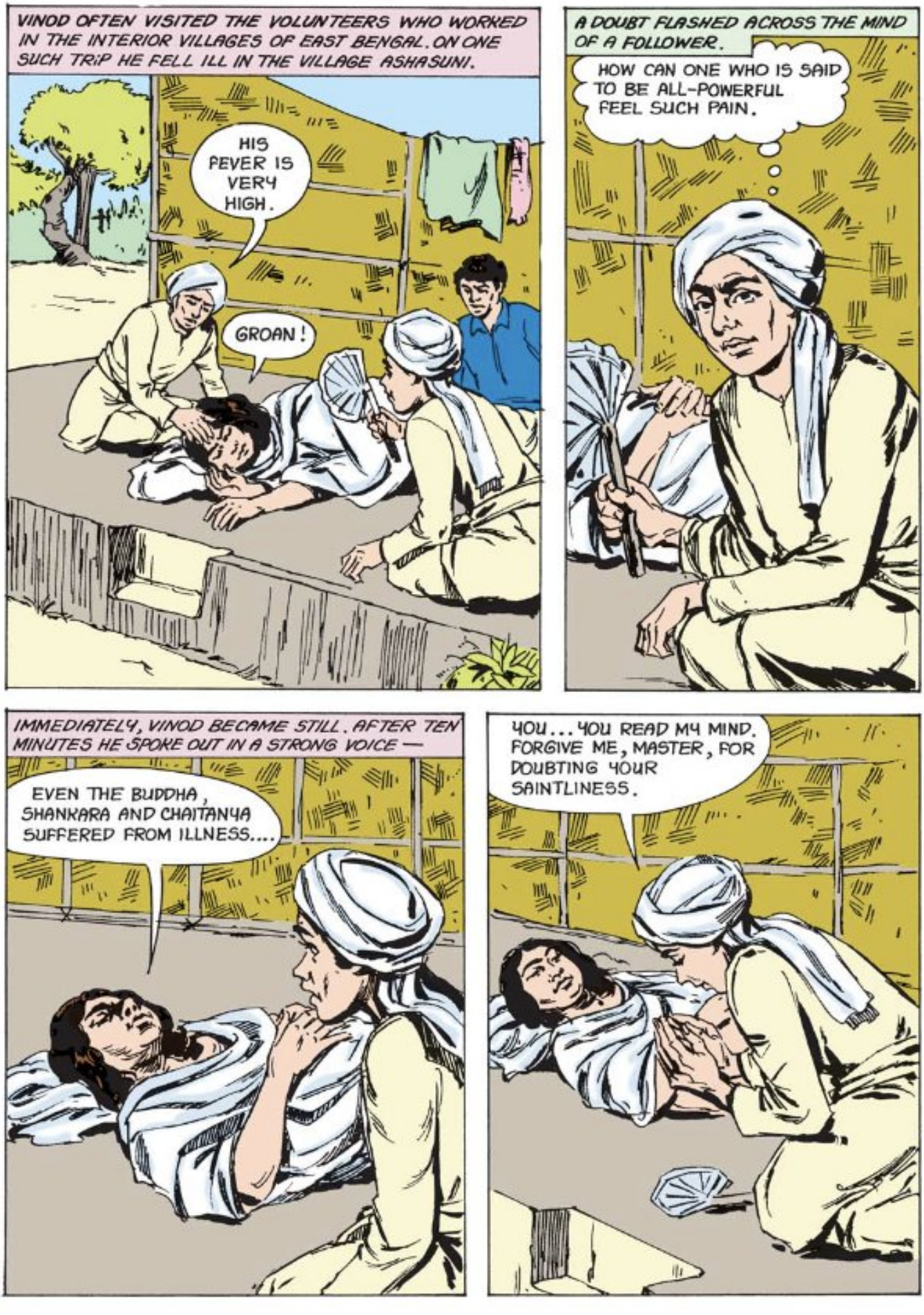


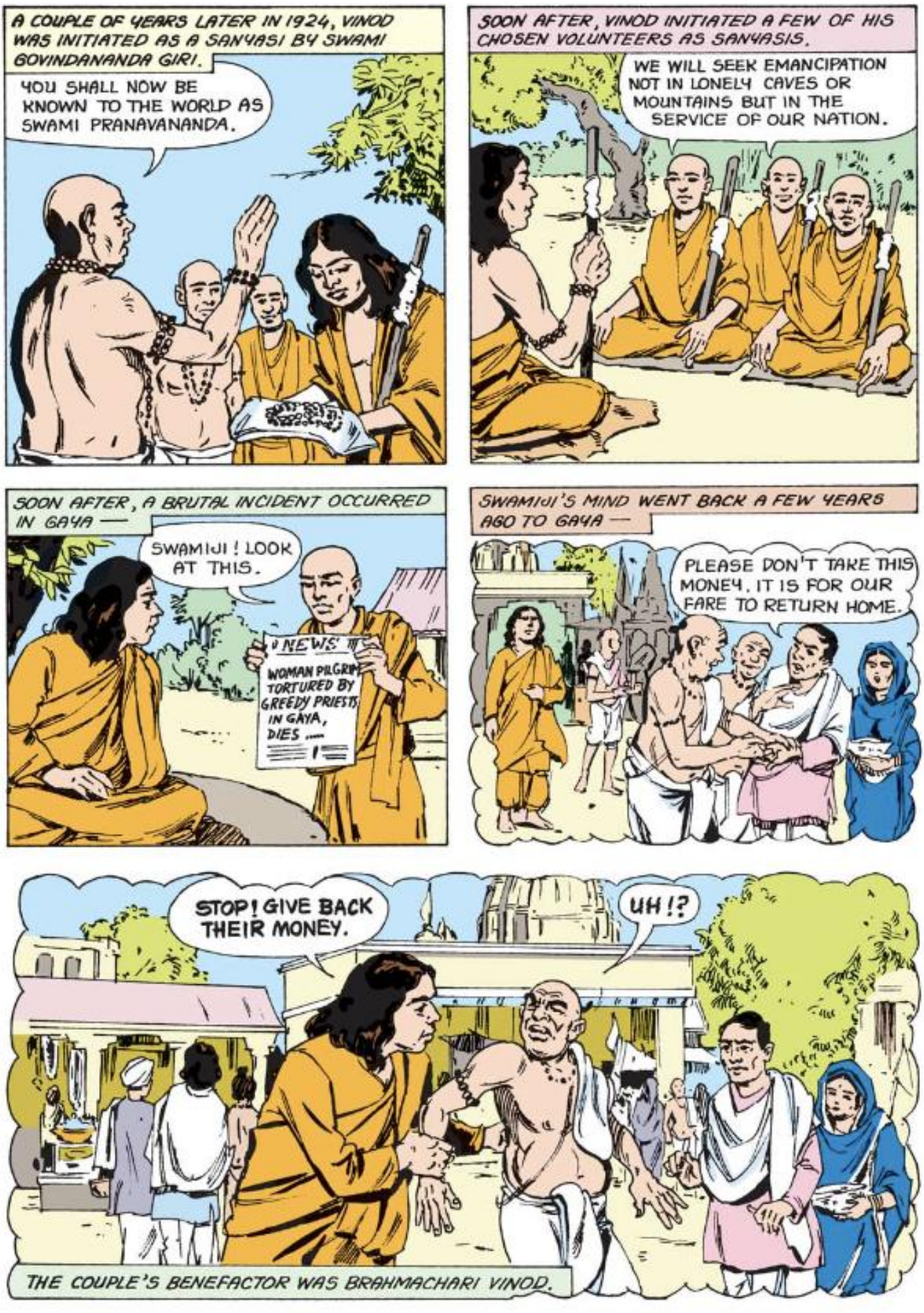


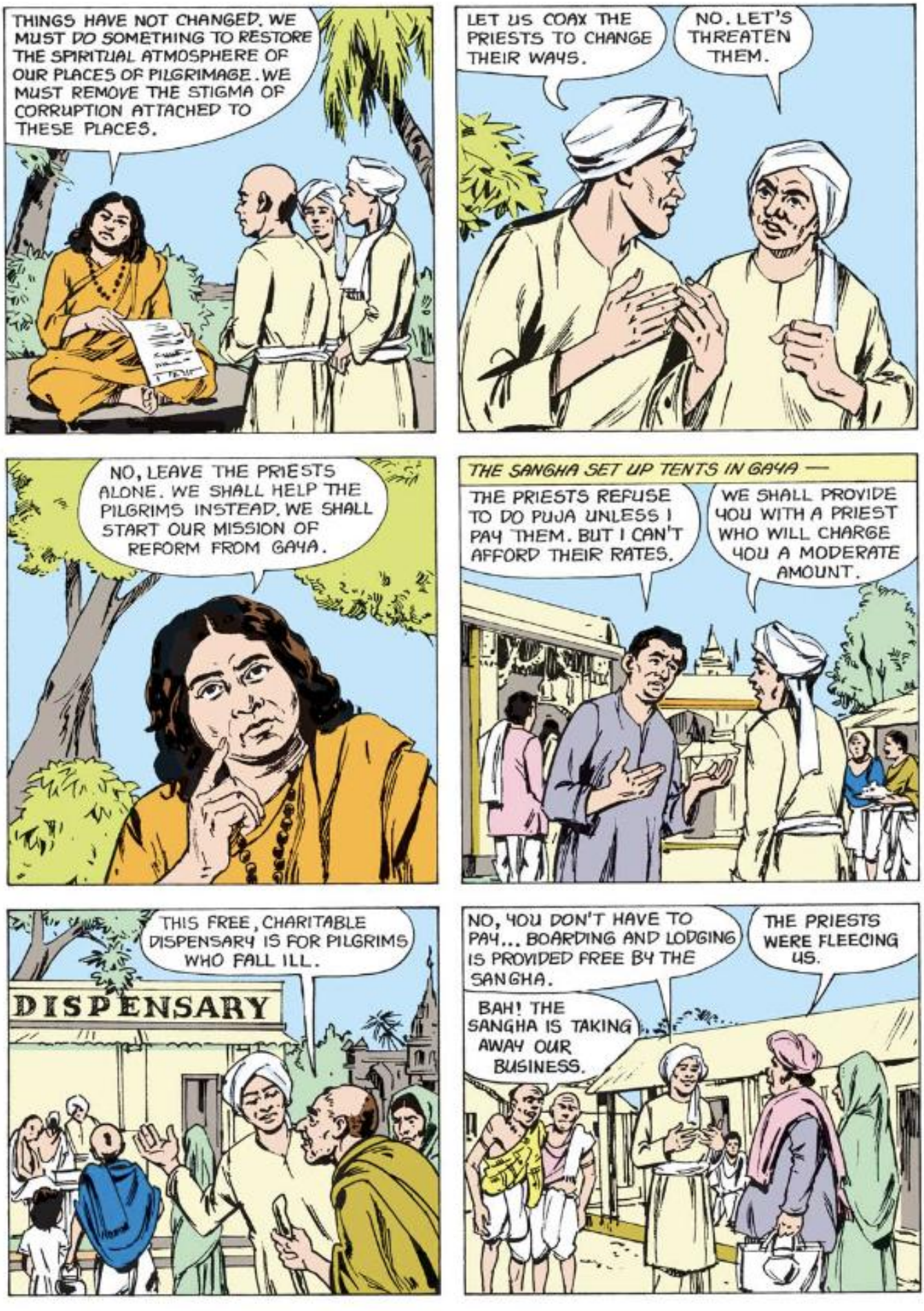
* O LORD! TEND ME. O LORD SAVE ME.

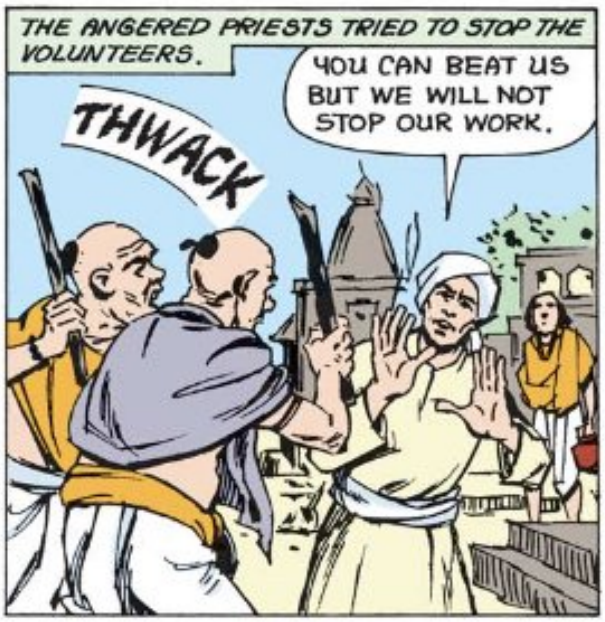

VINOD AND HIS YOUTHFUL BAND OF FOLLOWERS SOON BECAME A FAMILIAR SIGHT AT SCENES OF DISTRESS. DURING A CHOLERA EPIDEMIC —
DON'T GO NEAR HIM! HE IS DYING OF CHOLERA.
THESE YOUNG MEN DON'T FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES.
GET HIM SOME WATER, NANDI.
HE MADE NO DISTINCTION OF CASTE OR CREED.
THERE IS A BIG FIRE AT MUSLIMPARA.
LET US GO THERE AT ONCE.
VINOD ORGANISED HIS VOLUNTEERS —
PASS THE BUCKETS DOWN THE LINE.
AFTER A WHILE —
IT IS THANKS TO YOU, SADHU BHUINYA, THAT THE FIRE WAS CONTROLLED SO QUICKLY.
IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT THE WORK OF THE SANGHA SOON EXTENDED BEYOND BAJITPUR.
WE ARE NEEDED THERE.
NEWS
MANY DISTRICTS IN EAST BENGAL DEVASTATED BY STORMS!

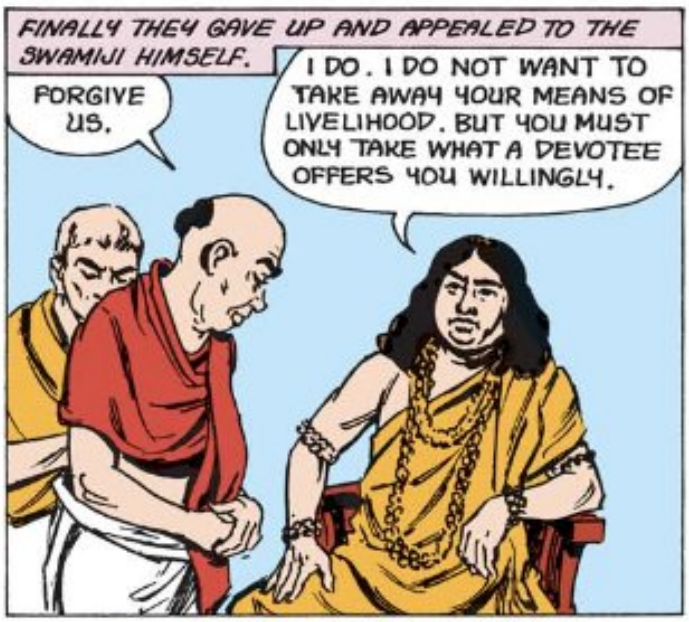

BUT SO MANY LAKHS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LEFT HOMELESS. HOW CAN WE HELP WITH OUR LIMITED FUNDS ?
WE WILL GO BEGGING FROM DOOR TO DOOR FOR MONEY, FOOD, CLOTHES AND EVEN VOLUNTEERS. ONCE WE LEAD, OTHERS WILL FOLLOW.
VINOD WAS PROVED RIGHT. INSPIRED BY HIM, PEOPLE FROM CALCUTTA AND MADARIPUR SET UP THE EAST BENGAL RELIEF SOCIETY.
EAST BENGAL RELIEF SOCIETY
BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA
HUNDREDS OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FLOCKED TO JOIN VINOD...
WE HAVE COME TO TAKE PART IN YOUR MISSION OF SERVICE.
COME.
BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA
...AND ALSO EMINENT PEOPLE LIKE THE SCIENTIST, SIR PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY.
AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FAMINE RELIEF COMMITEE, I PROPOSE WE CIRCULATE PAMPHLETS AND POSTERS AMONGST THE PEOPLE TO INCREASE THEIR AWARENESS OF THE MISERY AROUND THEM.
BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA
THE PAMPHLETS SUCCEEDED IN DRAWING MORE PEOPLE TO THE BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA.
WOULD YOU LET THEM DIE OF STARVATION?
LET US MISS A MEAL EVERY DAY AND SEND THE FOOD TO THE SANGHA FOR DISTRIBUTION.
LET'S ALSO JOIN THE SANGHA IN THE SUMMER VACATION.
Oblivious to dangers and discomfort the workers of the sangha do their duties


VINOD OFTEN VISITED THE VOLUNTEERS WHO WORKED IN THE INTERIOR VILLAGES OF EAST BENGAL. ON ONE SUCH TRIP HE FELL ILL IN THE VILLAGE ASHASUNI.
HIS FEVER IS VERY HIGH.
GROAN!
A DOUBT FLASHED ACROSS THE MIND OF A FOLLOWER.
HOW CAN ONE WHO IS SAID TO BE ALL-POWERFUL FEEL SUCH PAIN.
IMMEDIATELY, VINOD BECAME STILL. AFTER TEN MINUTES HE SPOKE OUT IN A STRONG VOICE —
EVEN THE BUDDHA, SHANKARA AND CHAITANYA SUFFERED FROM ILLNESS....
YOU... YOU READ MY MIND. FORGIVE ME, MASTER, FOR DOUBTING YOUR SAINTLINESS.


A COUPLE OF YEARS LATER IN 1924, VINOD WAS INITIATED AS A SANYASI BY SWAMI GOVINDANANDA GIRI.
YOU SHALL NOW BE KNOWN TO THE WORLD AS SWAMI PRANAVANANDA.
SOON AFTER, VINOD INITIATED A FEW OF HIS CHOSEN VOLUNTEERS AS SANYASIS.
WE WILL SEEK EMANCIPATION NOT IN LONELY CAVES OR MOUNTAINS BUT IN THE SERVICE OF OUR NATION.
SOON AFTER, A BRUTAL INCIDENT OCCURRED IN GAYA —
SWAMIJI ! LOOK AT THIS.
NEWS
WOMAN PILGRIM TORTURED BY GREEDY PRIESTS IN GAYA, DIES ...
SWAMIJI'S MIND WENT BACK A FEW YEARS AGO TO GAYA —
PLEASE DON'T TAKE THIS MONEY. IT IS FOR OUR FARE TO RETURN HOME.
STOP! GIVE BACK THEIR MONEY.
UH!?
THE COUPLE'S BENEFACTOR WAS BRAHMACHARI VINOD.

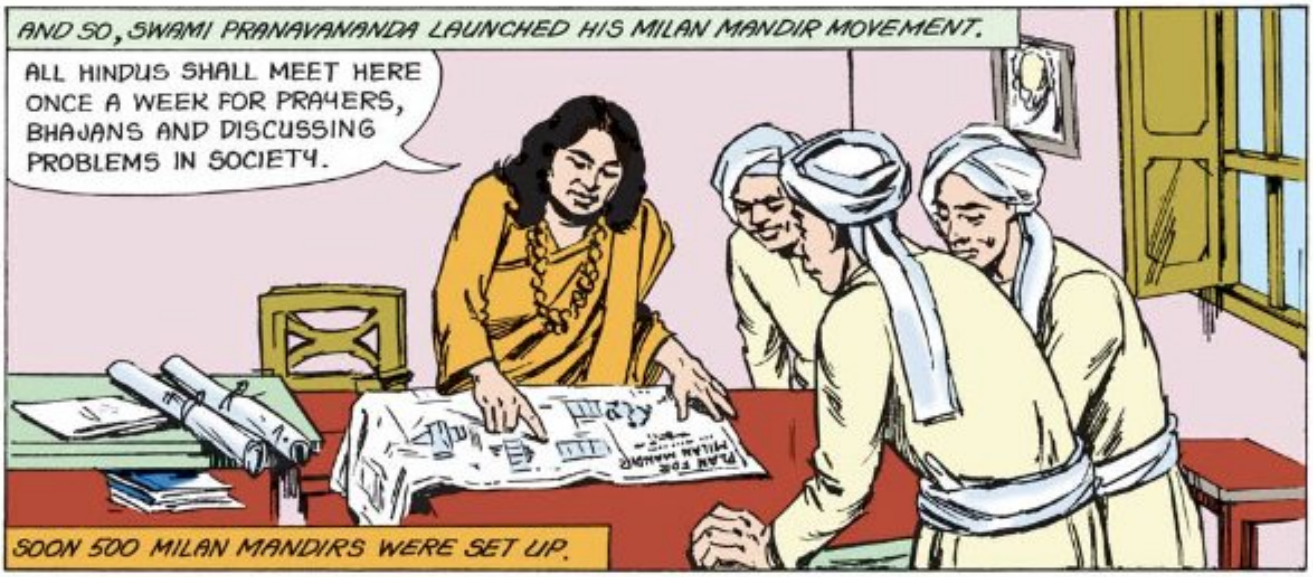

THINGS HAVE NOT CHANGED. WE MUST DO SOMETHING TO RESTORE THE SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE OF OUR PLACES OF PILGRIMAGE. WE MUST REMOVE THE STIGMA OF CORRUPTION ATTACHED TO THESE PLACES.
LET US COAX THE PRIESTS TO CHANGE THEIR WAYS.
NO. LET'S THREATEN THEM.
NO, LEAVE THE PRIESTS ALONE. WE SHALL HELP THE PILGRIMS INSTEAD. WE SHALL START OUR MISSION OF REFORM FROM GAYA.
THE SANGHA SET UP TENTS IN GAYA —
THE PRIESTS REFUSE TO DO PUJA UNLESS I PAY THEM. BUT I CAN'T AFFORD THEIR RATES.
WE SHALL PROVIDE YOU WITH A PRIEST WHO WILL CHARGE YOU A MODERATE AMOUNT.
THIS FREE, CHARITABLE DISPENSARY IS FOR PILGRIMS WHO FALL ILL.
DISPENSARY
NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY... BOARDING AND LODGING IS PROVIDED FREE BY THE SANGHA.
THE PRIESTS WERE FLEECING US.
BAH! THE SANGHA IS TAKING AWAY OUR BUSINESS.

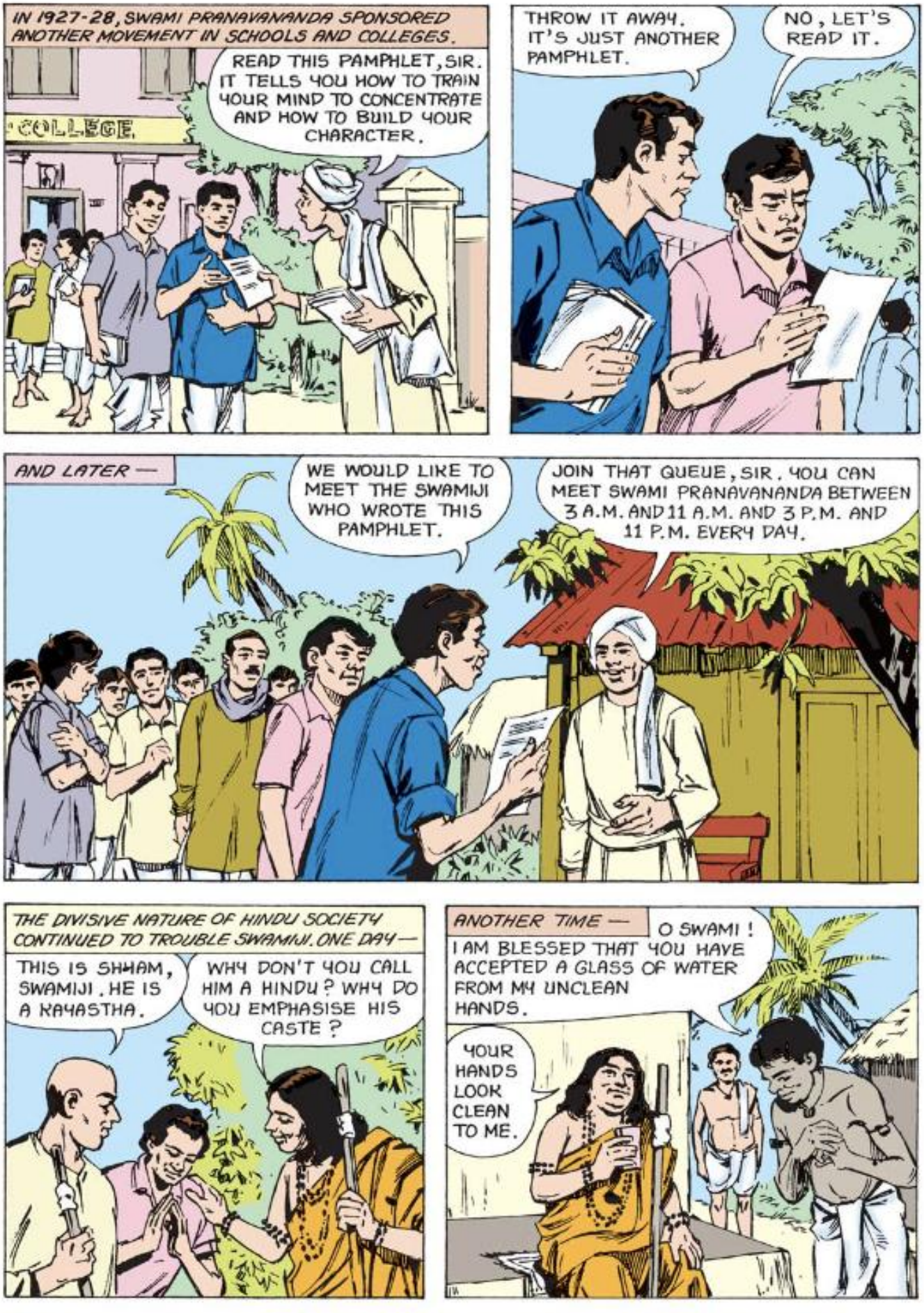

THE ANGERED PRIESTS TRIED TO STOP THE VOLUNTEERS.
YOU CAN BEAT US BUT WE WILL NOT STOP OUR WORK.
THWACK


FINALLY THEY GAVE UP AND APPEALED TO THE SWAMIJI HIMSELF.
FORGIVE US.
I DO. I DO NOT WANT TO TAKE AWAY YOUR MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD. BUT YOU MUST ONLY TAKE WHAT A DEVOTEE OFFERS YOU WILLINGLY.

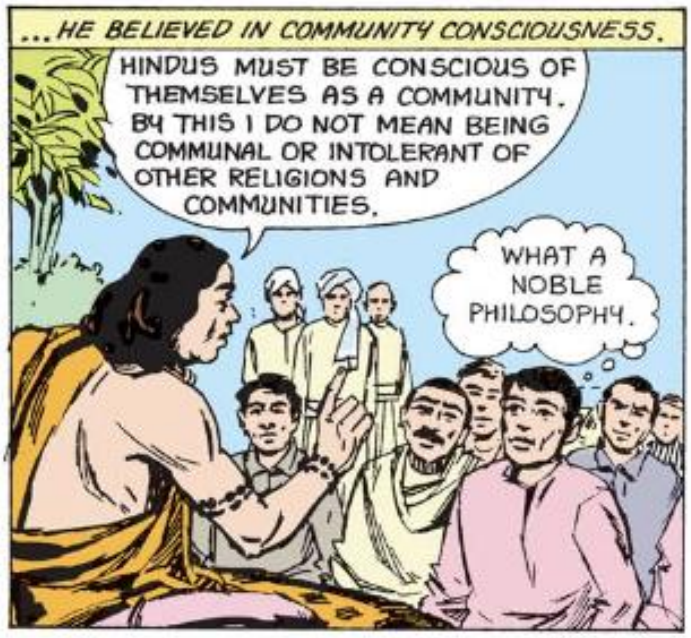
RICH BENEFACTORS CAME FORWARD —
PLEASE OPEN A PILGRIM CENTRE AT VARANASI...
...AND AT PURI. HERE IS MY DONATION.
AND SOON, CENTRES WERE ESTABLISHED IN ALLAHABAD, HARDWAR, GANGASAGAR, KURUKSHETRA, RAMESWARAM AND NABADWIP.

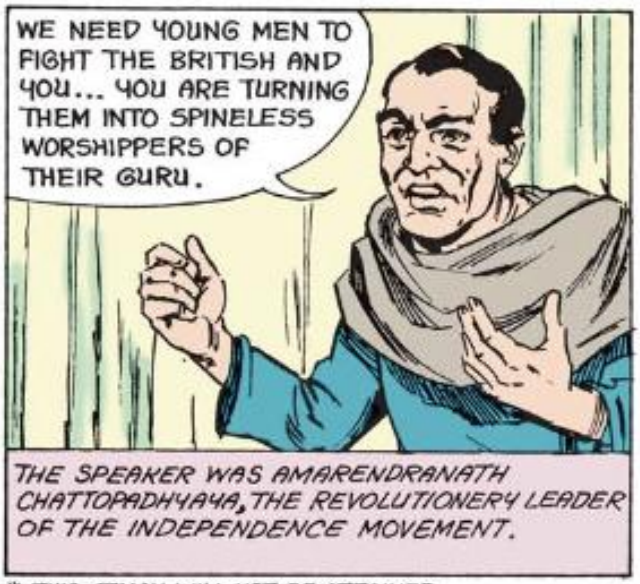
SWAMI PRANAVANANDA WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED BY THE ILLS THAT PLAGUED HINDU SOCIETY.
WE HINDUS ARE DISUNITED AND UNORGANIZED. I WANT TO CREATE A PLATFORM WHERE HINDUS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS MEET TOGETHER.


AND SO, SWAMI PRANAVANANDA LAUNCHED HIS MILAN MANDIR MOVEMENT.
ALL HINDUS SHALL MEET HERE ONCE A WEEK FOR PRAYERS, BHAJANS AND DISCUSSING PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY.
SOON 500 MILAN MANDIRS WERE SET UP.

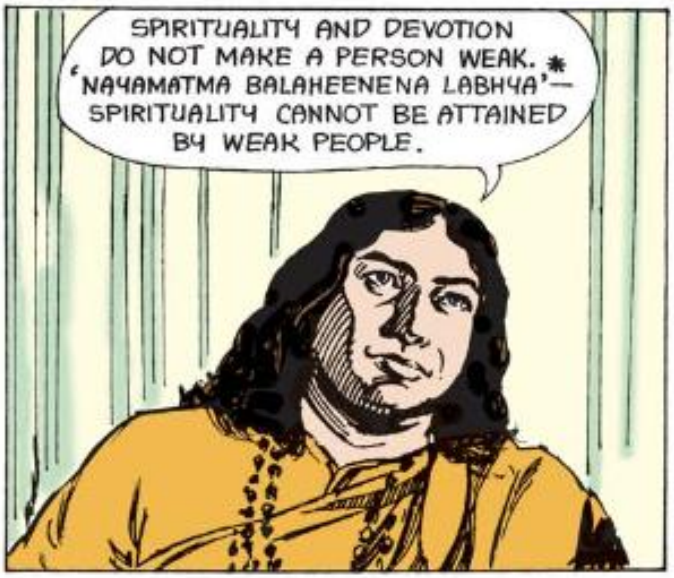

IN 1927-28, SWAMI PRANAVANANDA SPONSORED ANOTHER MOVEMENT IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES.
COLLEGE
READ THIS PAMPHLET, SIR. IT TELLS YOU HOW TO TRAIN YOUR MIND TO CONCENTRATE AND HOW TO BUILD YOUR CHARACTER.
THROW IT AWAY. IT'S JUST ANOTHER PAMPHLET.
NO, LET'S READ IT.
AND LATER —
WE WOULD LIKE TO MEET THE SWAMIJI WHO WROTE THIS PAMPHLET.
JOIN THAT QUEUE, SIR. YOU CAN MEET SWAMI PRANAVANANDA BETWEEN 3 A.M. AND 11 A.M. AND 3 P.M. AND 11 P.M. EVERY DAY.
THE DIVISIVE NATURE OF HINDU SOCIETY CONTINUED TO TROUBLE SWAMIJI. ONE DAY —
THIS IS SHYAM, SWAMIJI. HE IS A KAYASTHA.
WHY DON'T YOU CALL HIM A HINDU? WHY DO YOU EMPHASISE HIS CASTE?
ANOTHER TIME —
O SWAMI! I AM BLESSED THAT YOU HAVE ACCEPTED A GLASS OF WATER FROM MY UNCLEAN HANDS.
YOUR HANDS LOOK CLEAN TO ME.

BUT WHILE SWAMIJI DID NOT BELIEVE IN CASTE CONSCIOUSNESS...





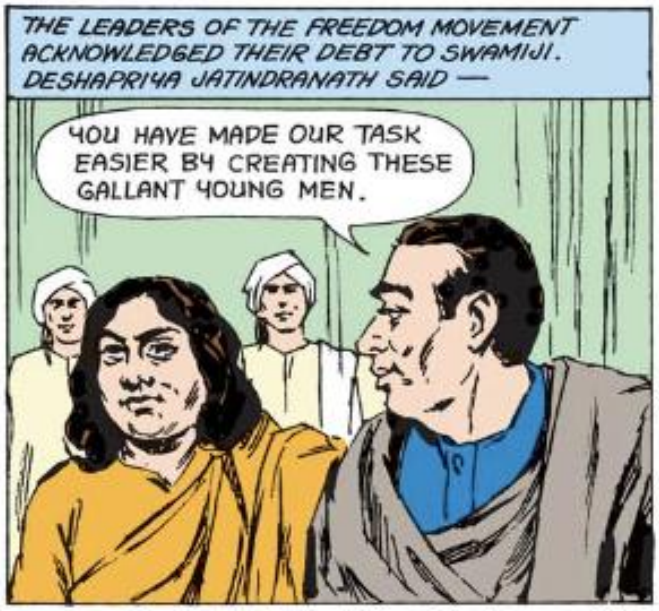
THE SPEAKER WAS AMARENDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA, THE REVOLUTIONERY LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT.

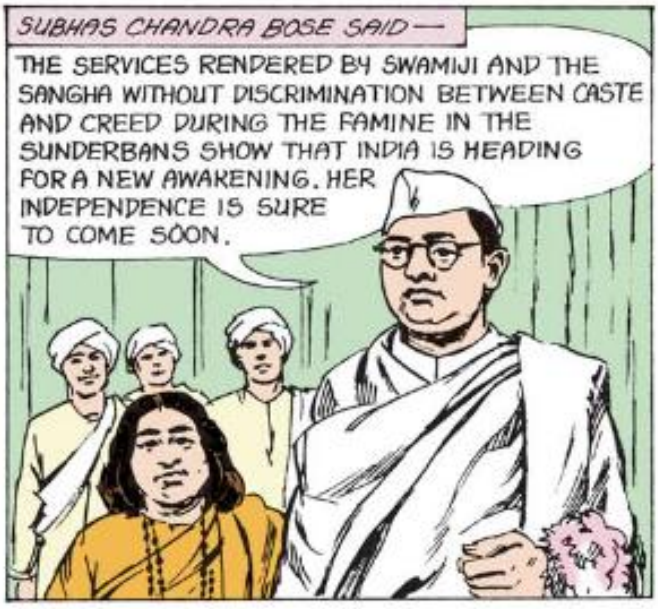


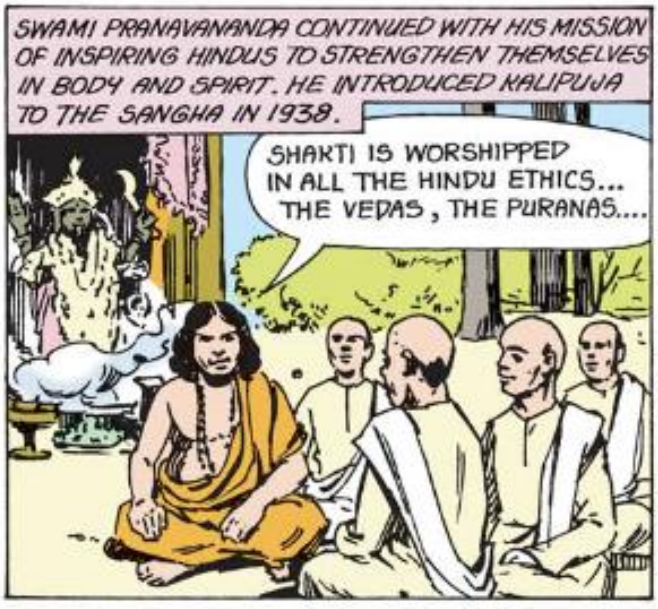
* THIS ATMAN WILL NOT BE ATTAINED BY THE WEAK (ATHARVA VEDA)

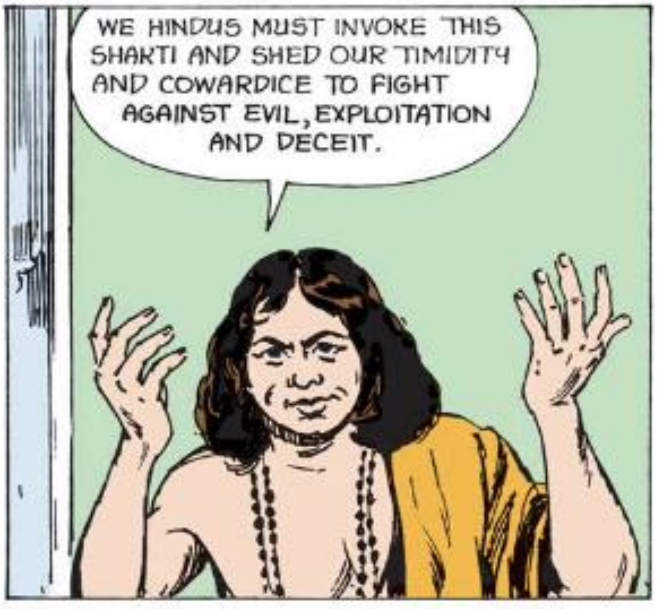
IF ONE DOES NOT HAVE A SENSE OF DEVOTION HOW CAN HE BE DEVOTED TO HIS MOTHERLAND ? WOULD A GROUP OF UNDEVOTED, AIMLESS AND INDISCIPLINED YOUTH BE READY TO SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES FOR A CAUSE ?
WELL...
MY SONS ARE NOT SPINELESS WORSHIPPERS. THEY STRIVE CONTINUOUSLY TO IMPROVE THEIR BODIES AND SOULS. COME, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW THEY TRAIN.
WHAT ARE THE GREATEST VIRTUES ?
VIRILITY, HEROISM, MANLINESS AND SELF-SACRIFICE.
WHAT ARE THE GREATEST SINS ?
WEARNESS, COWARDICE, TIMIDITY, NARROWNESS AND SELFISHNESS.
THEY WILL FORM A RAKSHI DAL WHICH SHALL BE EVER READY TO DEFEND ANY ATTACK ON SOCIETY.
AMARENDRA WAS THUS CONVINCED AND LEFT SATISFIED.
THE SWAMIJI'S MANTRA OF VIRTUES INSPIRED SO MANY YOUNG MEN TO REBEL THAT THE BRITISH WERE ALARMED.

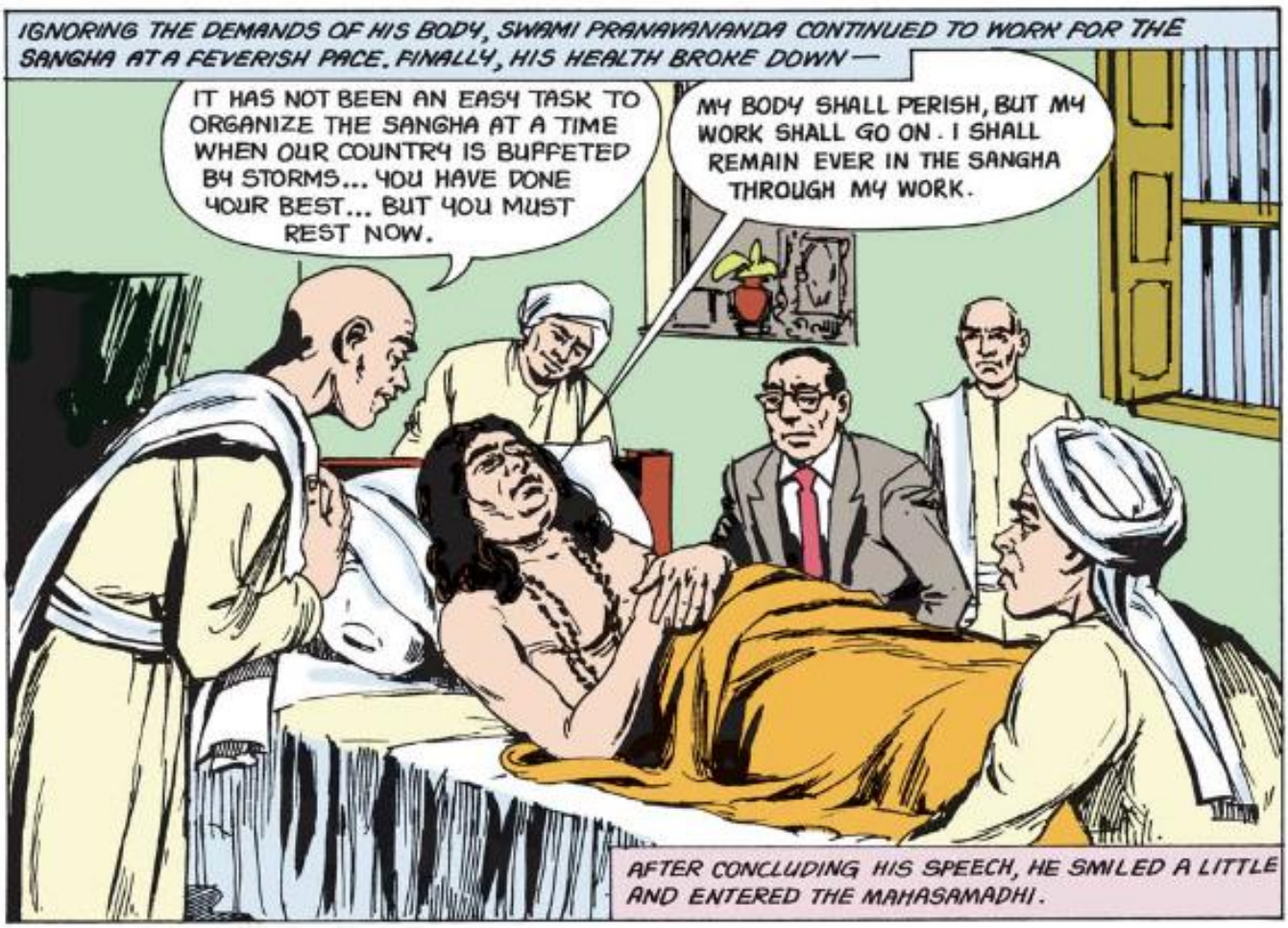
SWAMI PRANAVANANDA WAS KEPT IN CUSTODY. BUT THE BRITISH WERE FORCED TO RELEASE HIM THREE MONTHS LATER AS THEY COULD NOT FIND ANY PROOF AGAINST HIM.

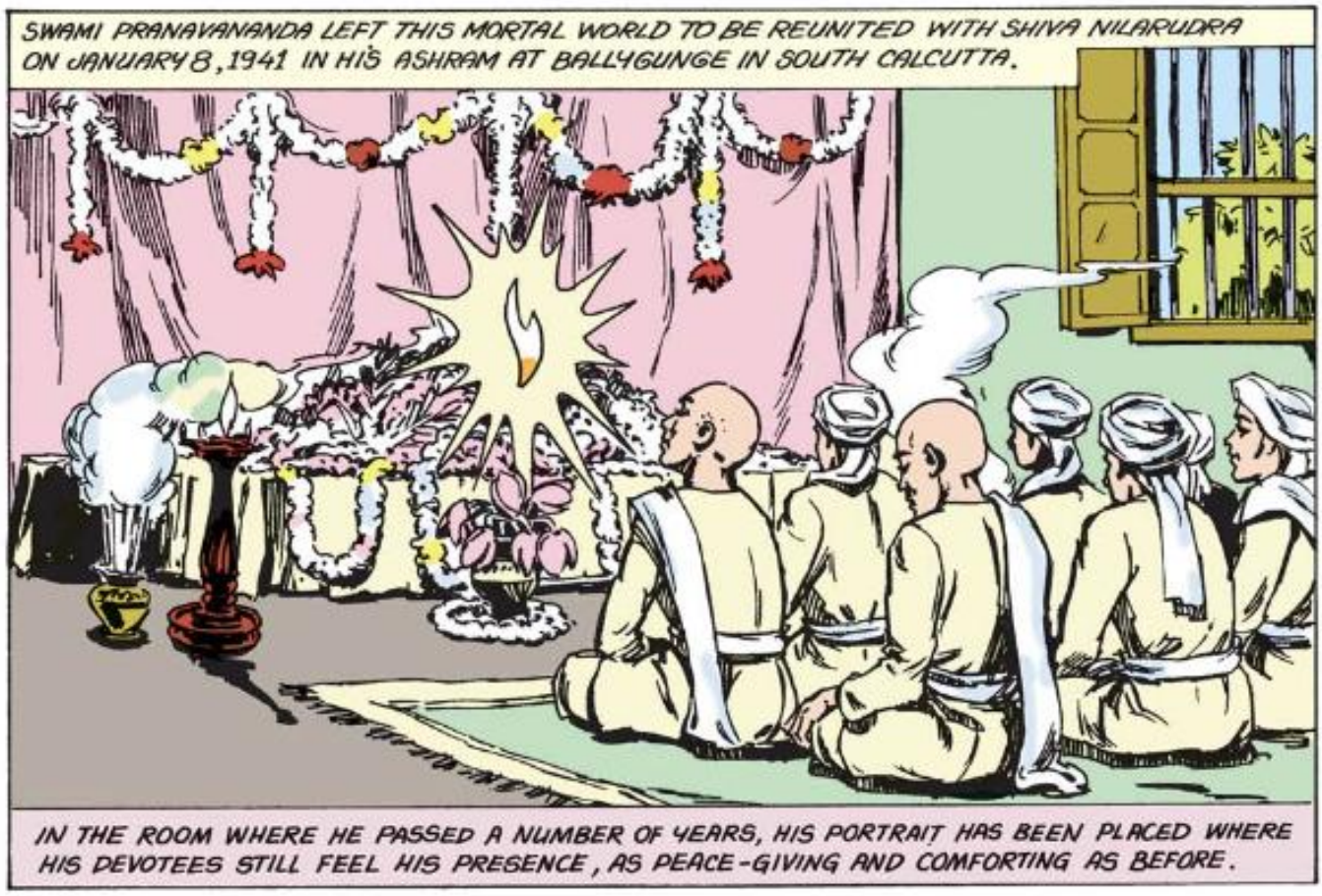


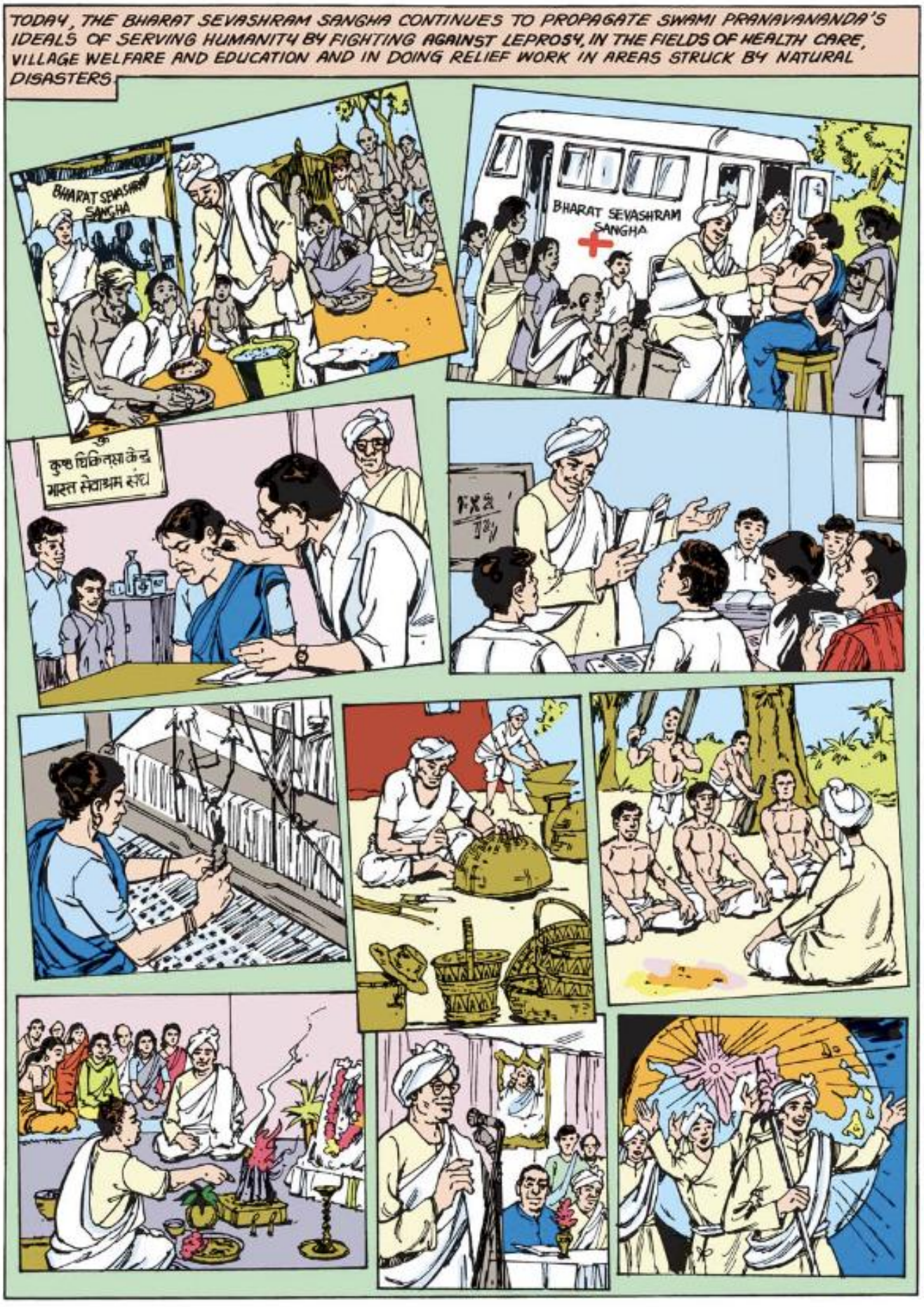







IGNORING THE DEMANDS OF HIS BODY, SWAMI PRANAVANANDA CONTINUED TO WORK FOR THE SANGHA AT A FEVERISH PACE. FINALLY, HIS HEALTH BROKE DOWN —
IT HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY TASK TO ORGANIZE THE SANGHA AT A TIME WHEN OUR COUNTRY IS BUFFETED BY STORMS... YOU HAVE DONE YOUR BEST... BUT YOU MUST REST NOW.
MY BODY SHALL PERISH, BUT MY WORK SHALL GO ON. I SHALL REMAIN EVER IN THE SANGHA THROUGH MY WORK.
AFTER CONCLUDING HIS SPEECH, HE SMILED A LITTLE AND ENTERED THE MAHASAMADHI.


SWAMI PRANAVANANDA LEFT THIS MORTAL WORLD TO BE REUNITED WITH SHIVA NILARUDRA ON JANUARY 8, 1941 IN HIS ASHRAM AT BALLYGUNGE IN SOUTH CALCUTTA.
IN THE ROOM WHERE HE PASSED A NUMBER OF YEARS, HIS PORTRAIT HAS BEEN PLACED WHERE HIS DEVOTEES STILL FEEL HIS PRESENCE, AS PEACE-GIVING AND COMFORTING AS BEFORE.


TODAY, THE BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA CONTINUES TO PROPAGATE SWAMI PRANAVANANDA'S IDEALS OF SERVING HUMANITY BY FIGHTING AGAINST LEPROSY, IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH CARE, VILLAGE WELFARE AND EDUCATION AND IN DOING RELIEF WORK IN AREAS STRUCK BY NATURAL DISASTERS
BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA
BHARAT SEVASHRAM SANGHA
कुष्ठ चिकित्सा केन्द्र
भारत सेवाश्रम संघ

SWAMI PRANAVANANDA

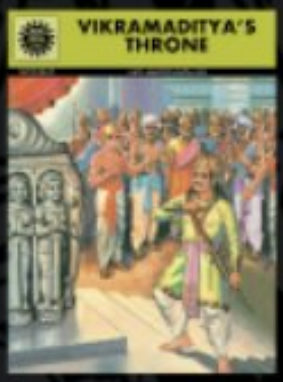
Vishnu Charan's son, Vinod, was a strange boy. His sister and friends often found him in a trance, deep in meditation. The adults saw in him the makings of a sage. The young saw in him a source of immeasurable peace and strength. Vinod himself recognised his calling to become a spiritual leader and awaken the youth to challenge the evils of the time. As Swami Pranavananda, he fulfilled this mission.

OTHER ACK VISIONARIES:

ALSO LOOK FOR:

EPICS & MYTHOLOGY

INDIAN CLASSICS



FABLES & HUMOUR

BRAVEHEARTS